

## WEED CONTROL POLICY

### PURPOSE

Weeds represents a threat to the conservation values of natural ecosystems. Weeds invade native plant communities and out-compete them causing a reduction in plant diversity and resulting in a loss of habitat for native animals.

The Shire carries out weed management across a range of assets such as parks, garden beds, natural areas, road verges, pathways, drainage areas, fence lines and median strips.

The process of biological invasion by weeds begins with their introduction, then their establishment and local infestation, survival, reproduction, and widespread dispersal, eventually finishing with full infestation of their potential range.

A diverse range of methods to monitor, prevent and control the spread of weeds are used, such as:

- Herbicide applications
- Mechanical slashing / whipper-snipping
- Hand removal
- Mulching to suppress weed growth
- Appropriate plant selection to smother the weeds, eg ground covers
- Turf management programs (mowing, fertilising, watering)
- Cleaning of machinery and equipment between sites
- Staying to delegated pathways and tracks, to reduce the spread of weeds

Roadsides are particularly vulnerable to weed invasion as they have a larger perimeter (or “edge”) to area ratio. As edges are particularly prone to degradation, the greater the length of the ‘edges’, the greater the opportunities for degradation. The roadside edges are subject to high levels of disturbance, and the spread of weeds is encouraged by any disturbance including burning, clearing, grazing, cultivation of firebreaks, and service installation.

### OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Eradicate or greatly reduce weed populations within Shire assets such as in drainage channels or along rural Road Reserves.
- Encourage Shire staff and landholders to seek out and adhere to industry guidelines and standards as specified in relevant codes of practice and other documents for weed control.
- Encourage local landholders to conduct appropriate weed management practices.
- Reduce the risk of fire in the road reserves.

- Comply with relevant legislation including the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

## DEFINITIONS

### Weed

A weed is any plant that is growing where it is not wanted.

### Road Reserve

The road reserve includes the road, remnant vegetation up to an adjacent properties fence line.

### Landholders

The holder or proprietor of land.

### Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)

There are a number of areas around Western Australia of environmental significance within which the exemptions in the Clearing Regulations do not apply. These areas are referred to as environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) and are declared under section 51B of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* and described in the Environmental Protection (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) Notice 2005.

### Clearing Regulations

*Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004*

## POLICY

Weed control within the Shire of Quairading is to be managed in accordance with the guidelines and procedures detailed below and in Annexure A.

## GUIDELINES

Herbicides used within the Shire, including Glyphosate, are registered and approved by the Department of Health for use and applied in accordance with the label instructions.

When assessing the best method of weed control, factors to consider include;

- Preventing trip hazards in paths or lawns
- Ensuring kerbing, paths and other infrastructure is not obscured or damaged
- Reducing hazardous weeds like Caltrop (prickles)
- Reducing fire risk
- Improving biodiversity within bushland areas by allowing natural regeneration of native plants
- Maintaining parks, gardens and natural areas to required service levels and standards.

The large majority of works that is conducted by the Shire occurs in open rural and park areas, drainage swales, road edge lines and footpaths. Visible signage is to be erected when conducting spraying works to notify the public of spraying occurring so they can choose to navigate around or temporarily avoid these areas if they wish.

The Shire may also use additives (surfactants) when applying herbicide to increase absorption time of the plant and reduce risk of it washing away. Herbicide is also not applied in windy conditions, high temperatures or when rain is forecast to avoid any off-target risks.

When spraying in environmentally sensitive areas, only those chemicals that are specific to those areas are used. All operators wear the correct personal protective equipment.

The Shire may also conduct slashing works before and/or after weed spraying to remove vegetation biomass to reduce the potential of high fuel loads and thus reducing the risk of bush fires. This process slows down the weed growth and delays or removes the production of flowering which leads to seed set, which then assists with the controlling of the spread of weeds in the longer term. During both slashing and spraying activities care is taken to avoid native vegetation.

The Shire will also investigate viable alternative options to assist with controlling weeds as researched and developed by the Western Australian Local Government Integrated Weed Management Working Group for application by WA Local Governments more broadly as part of their weed control programmes.

Any resident with a chemical sensitivity or who doesn't wish to have herbicide sprayed near their property can register their verge as "No Spray" and commit to managing their own weed management on and in front of their properties to help Council reduce its reliance on herbicide.

Adjacent landowners are encouraged to adhere to Guide to the Exemption for Clearing Native Vegetation as published by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation ([https://www.der.wa.gov.au/images/documents/your-environment/native-vegetation/Guidelines/4guide\\_transport\\_corridors\\_native\\_veg.pdf](https://www.der.wa.gov.au/images/documents/your-environment/native-vegetation/Guidelines/4guide_transport_corridors_native_veg.pdf))

## **Annexure A – Procedures**

### **STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT**

*Local Government Act 1995*

*Environmental Protection Act 1986*

*Biosecurity Agriculture Management Act 2007*

*Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004*

Record of Policy Review						
Version	Author	Council Adoption	Resolution	Reason for Review	Review Date	CEO Signature
01	Sarah Caporn	14/12/2023	135-23/24	New Policy – Replaces Road Reserves Weed Control Policy	Dec 2025	<i>Nickie Ness</i>

## Annexure A

### 1. General weed management for Council Employees

#### 1.1 Herbicide spraying

Off-target spraying may kill native understory and create an altered environment for weeds to invade.

Risk can be minimised by:

- (a) Restricting spraying to the road shoulder and around road furniture,
- (b) Not spraying on wet or windy days,
- (c) Not using residual herbicides along watercourses, and
- (d) Not using non-selective herbicides near susceptible plants.

#### 1.2 Alternative Weed Control Strategies

Weeds can be managed using many different methods. The most effective management of weeds is usually achieved by a combination of methods with follow-up over a number of years. The stage that a weed has reached in the invasion process determines the best approach for its control.

The three main approaches to weed management are:

- (a) Prevention of establishment,
- (b) Early detection and eradication, and
- (c) Management of existing populations.

#### Prevention

This is the most effective means of control. Establishing workable prevention mechanisms is much more cost-effective than controlling established populations.

Prevention mechanisms include:

- (a) Cleaning machinery between jobs,
- (b) Only using clean, weed-free fill materials, including stockpiles,
- (c) Marking turn-around points for maintenance works to prevent longitudinal spread
- (d) Through mowing or grading,
- (e) Revegetation of disturbed areas, and

(f) Minimising or avoiding disturbance in areas of native vegetation.

#### Early Detection and Eradication

The second most cost-effective means of weed control is early detection and eradication. Eradication of newly established populations is possible only if detection mechanisms are in place to identify them.

#### Management of Existing Populations

Managing existing weed infestations can involve eradication, control or containment depending upon the extent and severity of infestations, and the resources available to manage the program. Mulching, burning, cultivation, introduction of competition, grazing, biological control, and chemicals are all management tools that can be used where appropriate.

#### **Grazing and Stock Movement**

Grazing of domestic livestock is defined as vegetation clearance under the *Native Vegetation Act, 1991*. Movement of stock along road reserves can aid the spread of weeds, compact the soil, exacerbate soil erosion problems and hinder native plant regeneration. Whilst it is necessary to allow the moving of stock along road reserves to move them between paddocks, stock movement should be avoided where there is declared rare flora or native vegetation that is classified in an environmentally sensitive area (ESA). Landholders must find alternative routes for the movement of stock through negotiation with adjacent landholders.

#### **Fencing**

Item 10 of Regulation 5 of the *Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004* provides an exemption for clearing along a fence line of, or within, a property to the width necessary to provide access to construct or maintain a fence, provided that the clearing, combined with other limited exempt clearing on the property, does not exceed 1 hectare in the financial year in which the clearing takes place. This exemption applies to the owner of the property on which the clearing is to take place. This exemption does not apply in ESAs.

Item 11 of Regulation 5 of the Clearing Regulations provides an exemption for clearing between private property and Crown land (e.g. a road reserve), provided that the clearing on the Crown land is no more than 1.5 metres from the fence. This exemption applies to the owner of the land on which the clearing is to take place, therefore the written approval of the owner of that Crown land (e.g. the Local Government in the case of a road reserve) must be obtained prior to undertaking the clearing. This exemption does not apply in ESAs.

#### **Removal of Plant Material**

Dead timber on roadsides can provide valuable habitat for small mammals, reptiles and most importantly invertebrates. Allowing it to decompose through natural processes also maintains integrity of the nutrient cycling that underpins stable ecosystems. Removal of dead timber destroys these habitats and processes. Another aspect of the stability of roadside ecosystems is the maintenance of the ability to regenerate. Excessive removal of seed from native vegetation diminishes the amount of seed available in the soil for new plants to grow from. Ultimately, this can lead to lower densities of some species and alteration of the vegetation structure.

## Summer Weed Control

Summer weed control is an imperative component of roadside weed control and must be undertaken when weed burdens are posing significant threat to the native roadside vegetation and surrounding agricultural land. Summer weed control involves accounting for the same policy measures as discussed for general weed control. Summer weed control also needs to account for the risk fire plays when weeds are left uncontrolled.

Before implementing a summer weed control program, it is important to consider the high persistency of summer weeds and difficulty in containing their spread. Species such as caltrop (*Tribulus terrestris*), afghan thistle (*Solanum hoplopetalum*) and prickly saltwart (*Salsola kali*) are examples of summer weeds with highly adapted systems that make them very difficult to control. In these cases control methods should take into consideration:

- (a) Growth stages of the plant
- (b) Seed development stages and timeframes
- (c) Herbicide tolerance and susceptibility
- (d) Areas of high population densities of the specific weed and potential distribution zones.

## Declared Plants

Plants may be 'declared' by the Agriculture Protection Board under the *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976*. If a plant is declared, Council Employees are obliged to control that plant on roadside reserves where they are present. Declaration specifies a category, or categories, for each plant according to the control strategies or objectives which are considered to be appropriate in a particular place.

Among the factors considered in categorising declared plants are:

- (a) The impact of the plant on individuals, agricultural production and the community in general,
- (b) Whether it is already established in the area, and
- (c) Feasibility and cost of possible control measures.

### Collecting plant samples for identification

Identification of plants is important to establish a record of the distribution or to confirm if a plant new to the area is declared. Specimens collected can be sent to any office of the Department of Agriculture and Food where it can be identified or sent on to the State herbarium if identification cannot be made. Preparing plant samples to ensure that the key identifying components are included is essential to assist in this process. A publication by the CRC for weed management gives a very comprehensive methodology for collecting and preserving plant collections. This document is available from their website: [www.weedsrc.org.au](http://www.weedsrc.org.au).

## 2. General weed management for Adjacent Landholders

Roadside reserve weed control management must be undertaken with close consultation with Shire staff to ensure that adjacent landholders adhere to minimum disturbance guidelines when controlling weed populations in roadsides.

Adjacent landholders are encouraged to maintain effective weed management strategies along fence lines adjacent to a road reserve to suppress weed populations from entering the road reserve from their properties and from entering their properties from the road reserve.

In road reserves where native vegetation (trees, shrubs, grasses and other ground covers) may be impacted you should seek advice from the Department of Environment and Conservation Native Vegetation Conservation Branch ((08) 9219 8744) as a clearing permit may be required under Part V of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

NOTE: This includes farmers spraying weeds in road reserves and in fact if a landholder inadvertently kills native vegetation they could be liable under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

The following weed management practices can be implemented to ensure suppression of weed populations:

### **2.1 Herbicide spraying**

Selective and non-selective herbicides may be used to manage weed infestations up to 1.5m from the existing fence line on the side of the road reserve.

The use of selective and non-selective herbicides may be necessary to manage weed populations up to 5m away from the internal fence line of a landholder's property.

It is important that landholders obtain expert advice on suitable herbicides to use for different weeds present on road reserves and take into consideration the presence of waterways, livestock and native species present before undertaking herbicide applications.

### **2.2 Cultivation**

Cultivation is an effective weed management strategy to use to control the 5m buffer area from the internal fence line of a landholder's property. This will also effectively establish fire break zones between the road reserve and a property.

### **2.3 Burning**

Burning is an effective weed management strategy to use to again, control the 5m buffer area from the internal fence line of a landholder's property. This will also effectively establish fire break zones between the road reserve and a property.

### **Summer Weed control**

Summer weed control is an imperative component of roadside weed control and must be undertaken when weed burdens are posing significant threat to the native roadside vegetation and surrounding agricultural land. Summer weed control involves accounting for the same policy measures as discussed for general weed control. Summer weed control also needs to account for the risk fire plays when weeds are left uncontrolled.

Before implementing a summer weed control program, it is important to consider the high persistency of summer weeds and difficulty in containing their spread. Certain species have highly adapted systems that make them very difficult to control. In these cases, control methods should take into consideration:

- (a) Growth stages of the plant
- (b) Seed development stages and timeframes
- (c) Herbicide tolerance and susceptibility

(d) Areas of high population densities of the specific weed and potential distribution zones.

### **Declared plants**

Plants may be 'declared' by the Agriculture Protection Board under the *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976*. If a plant is declared, landholders are obliged to control that plant on their own property where present. Declaration specifies a category, or categories, for each plant according to the control strategies or objectives which are considered to be appropriate in a particular place.

Among the factors considered in categorising declared plants are:

- (a) The impact of the plant on individuals, agricultural production and the community in general,
- (b) Whether it is already established in the area, and
- (c) Feasibility and cost of possible control measures.

### Collecting plant samples for identification

Identification of plants is important to establish a record of the distribution or to confirm if a plant new to the area is declared. Specimens collected can be sent to any office of the Department of Agriculture and Food where it can be identified or sent on to the State herbarium if identification cannot be made. Preparing plant samples to ensure that the key identifying components are included is essential to assist in this process. A publication by the CRC for weed management gives a very comprehensive methodology for collecting and preserving plant collections. This document is available from their website: [www.weedscrc.org.au](http://www.weedscrc.org.au).

## **3. Role of Council in Assisting Landholders with Roadside Weed Control Strategies**

### **3.1 Herbicide spraying**

Permission must be obtained from the Shire prior to any herbicide applications sprayed on Quairading road reserves exceeding the permitted 1.5m boundary fence limit as described in the Clearing Regulations.

### **3.2 Cultivation**

Cultivation is an effective weed management strategy to use to control the 5m buffer area from the internal fence line of a landholder's property. This will also effectively establish fire break zones between the road reserve and a property. No Council approval is required for cultivation of fire breaks.

### **3.3 Burning**

Permission must be obtained from Council prior to any burning program being conducted on any Shire of Quairading road reserves.

Any burning for weed control must be undertaken in accordance with the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and any local restrictions that are in force at the time. Further information on the



Restricted and Prohibited Burning Periods are available at the Shire's website -  
<https://www.quairading.wa.gov.au/fire-control-prevention.aspx>