

**Email sent to all Council and NPWS representatives involved in the
SYDNEY REGION WEED ACTION PROGRAM**

From Jonathan Sanders
President, Sydney Weeds Committee

8th September 2011

This e-mail is being sent to you because you are participants in the Weed Action Program (WAP) of the Sydney Weeds Committee. It is important that you take the time to read and understand the information below, so that you are able to meet the requirements of your past participation, and continue to be a part of the WAP for coming years.

WAP Year 1 (2010-2011)

Expenditure of all remaining grant funds

Progress Reports were received from everyone in July (thank you very much). Some organisations had not spent all of their grant funds at the time of this report. I remind you that all Year 1 grant funds **must be spent by Friday the 28th of October 2011**. If this will be a problem for you, you need to advise the Executive Officer (Rosanna Luca) now, so that we can re-assign the funds.

A Final Report for how you spent the remaining part of your Year 1 grant funding will be due 30th November 2011.

WAP Year 2 (2011-2012, this current financial year)

Timeframe

We have a new NSW Government, with a State budget passed only this week, and the Departments are therefore still liaising with their Ministers about the detail of what is required in various programs. **We therefore do not expect to actually receive the grant funds for year 2 until the end of this year (around December)**. We are sorry for this delay, but I am sure that you understand that we have to work within the budgetary and administrative timeframes set by the Department.

Over the next 2 months, you will be asked to review your organisation's original 5 year WAP targets (as sent in last year), and provide information on how these targets will be achieved during year 2.

Please start thinking now about how you wish to spend any WAP funding you receive (this may include follow-up work and building on the achievements of Year 1).

Our advice is that you should continue with your normal weed control programs, and plan for the Year 2 WAP funding to be a 6 month boost of funds, to be spent in the period from January to June 2012. This 6-month timeframe should allow us to get the whole WAP timing back into alignment with financial years, which is obviously easier for many organisations to manage in their budgets.

I note, however, that many organisations will wind down in the Christmas-January period, so you will also need to plan ways to ensure that you are able to get

underway rapidly with Year Two's funding (e.g. line up contractors beforehand, ensure there are arrangements to receive funds and approve expenditure, etc.).
The application process

Rosanna and Shelly are actively working on streamlining the paperwork for Year 2 funding (with the aim of making things clearer this time around). We are also adjusting the application process to minimise the follow-up work that is needed to record results.

This year, for each site for which you wish to receive WAP funds (for on-ground weed control), you will also be required to also provide information about the current (pre-works) condition of the site, the main weed issues, the work proposed etc. as a part of application process. This **"Site Record Form"** will be distributed very soon, with more explanation about its use. The aim is to collect this information for WAP-funded weed management sites in a simple and consistent way, so we can track progress on the ground over time. The information collected will be transferred to the SWC GIS database. **This information is absolutely vital for the ongoing success of the WAP**, as it allows us to clearly demonstrate the weed-control that you are all achieving across Sydney. The SWC report for Year 1 has been sent to the Department of Primary Industry, and it showed a great deal of progress, but we must have site information from now on to demonstrate and track the actual achievements on the ground.

Please note that the requirement to supply this data is outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (section 3.5.3c Data and Evaluation *"the acquisition and management of baseline data so that condition change can be quantified and effectively monitored"*.) You should therefore all be aware of this expectation for site recording, and be ready to meet it.

Expectations for Year 2 funding

For Year 1, the Sydney Weeds Committee was able to utilise some existing sub-committee funds and annual membership fees to cover almost all of the costs for grant administration and project support. This meant that 99% of the year 1 WAP grant funds were allocated to members for on-ground work, inspections and community education. The Sydney Weeds Committee remains committed to allocating as much as possible of the funding it receives directly to its members.

However, for Year 2, we no longer have the financial reserves to subsidise the administration of the WAP. It is clear that we need to ensure that there is adequate administration and support, because otherwise the whole project suffers, and in the long-term, we may even jeopardise the WAP funding, through inadequate reporting.

The Board has therefore decided that, from Year 2, a small percentage of the WAP grant will be needed to cover some of the cost of grant administration and project support. In addition, several members who did not receive any funding in Year 1 have (quite reasonably) requested that they be included in the funding mix for Year 2.

In order to (i) allocate some funding to additional Sydney Weeds member organisations and (ii) sustain the current level of administrative/project support for the WAP grant, the Board has calculated that **each member may need to budget for a 7.5% reduction in the projected grant allocation for Year 2.**

(Please note that the DPI has advised that their standard expectation is that 10% of grant funds will be spent on administration, and we are running significantly below this).

We appreciate, however, that this reduction may have consequences for a few of you, in that a 7.5 % reduction may possibly mean the difference between being able to achieve a particular WAP action, or not being able to proceed at all. Therefore, as part of the Year 2 application process over the next couple of months, we will also ask you to explain the implications for your programs and targets, in the event of a 7.5% decrease of grant funding, and this will give you an opportunity to make a case for why you may need a lesser reduction. Please note, however that we must find these funds from somewhere, and so it will not be possible for everyone make a special case. The Board will also keep a record of which members have their funding reduced, and will take this into consideration for funding allocation when any future increase in funding is received (In other words, we will do our best to make up for any reduction in the future).

What will happen next?

The application and Site Record forms for Year 2 will be distributed within the next fortnight by Rosanna Luca, who will also be available to answer your questions about them at the upcoming regional Sub-committee meetings.

We really appreciate your co-operation and patience as we refine these administrative and recording processes, with the aim of making it as simple and smooth as possible for all involved.

Rosanna can also be contacted on Thursdays and Fridays, phone 9895 7488.
Email rosanna.luca@cma.nsw.gov.au

The Sydney Weeds Committee has made major strides this year in improving the planning and co-ordination of weed control across Sydney, and with your continued involvement and participation, we intend to set new standards over the coming years. Allow me to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of you on behalf of the Board for your efforts over the past 12 months and more, and we look forward to making further improvements in weed management and resourcing over the coming year.

Jonathan.