

Greater Sydney Local Land Services

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Henry Wong
General Manager
Strathfield Municipal Council
PO Box 120
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Dear Mr Wong

Sydney Flower Market & Council's responsibility under the Biosecurity Act

I am writing concerning the Sydney Flower Market and your Council's responsibilities under the Biosecurity Act.

The Sydney Flower Market located at Flemington is the largest flower market in Australia and supplies cut flowers to florists and other distributors throughout NSW. With over 170 traders, all of who grow, buy and/or sell plants or parts of plants, the Sydney Flower Market is one of the highest risk sites for weeds in the Greater Sydney Region. The following weeds have previously been detected for sale at the Sydney Flower Market:

- Opuntia microdasys
- Asparagus densiflorus
- Asparagus aethiopicus
- Asparagus plumosus
- Asparagus macowanii
- Asparagus virgatis
- Salix matsudana
- Salix nigricans
- Cortaderia selloana
- Privets
- Cotoneaster
- Turkey rhubarb
- Balloon vine
- Camphor laurel

Ongoing surveillance and regulation of sale of weed species is essential to minimising the risk of spread to new locations. Weeds are a biosecurity risk that affect agriculture, other industries, the environment and human health. Effective local weeds management programs protect land, water, food production, our native plants and animals, our agriculture industries and the natural beauty of local areas.

Following a review of weeds legislation in 2014, the NSW Government made a decision that enforcement of weeds legislation will remain the responsibility of Local Government as designated Local Control Authorities across all of NSW. This decision continues arrangements that have been in place for over 100 years, and is reflected in the NSW Biosecurity Act which took effect on 1 July 2017.

Accordingly Local Government is responsible for enforcing weeds legislation, with that legislative obligation applying all land in Strathfield Council regardless of tenure, in the same way as it applies in all other Local Government areas. The Biosecurity Act (Sections 370 & 371) specifies local



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councils are local control authorities with the following weed management functions:

- the prevention, elimination, minimisation and management of the biosecurity risk posed or likely to be posed by weeds (on all lands within their area of operation)
- to develop, implement, coordinate and review weed control programs
- to inspect land in connection with local control authority weed control functions
- to keep records about the exercise of the local control authority functions under the Act
- to report to the Secretary about the exercise of local control authority functions under the Act.

I understand that following the resignation of Stuart Henry, Council has decided not to employ a Biosecurity Weeds Officer to undertake its statutory weed management functions and it appears that this leaves a significant gap in how Strathfield Council will fulfil its prescribed regulatory functions for weed management.

This is of great concern as Council's staff, with support from NSW DPI and the NSW Weeds Action Program, have made significant progress in working with the flower growers to prevent the trade of plants that pose the greatest risks.

A permit system has been put in place to allow the sale of certain plants where it can be demonstrated that that steps have been taken to minimise the risks. The permit system was developed in collaboration with the flower growers and will be severely undermined by the absence of ongoing inspections by Council's staff.


Biosecurity is now everyone's business and Strathfield Council has significant industries and natural areas to protect. Council also has a responsibility to prevent weeds from spreading to areas beyond its own boundaries.

On behalf of the Greater Sydney Regional Weed Committee, I encourage Council to reconsider its decision not to appoint an appropriately skilled officer to undertake its required weed management functions, including an inspection program at the Sydney Flower Market.

The NSW Weeds Action Program provides funding to local councils to assist with their functions under the Act, and Greater Sydney Local Land Services can provide advice on funding opportunities.

For further information on these matters, please contact Anthony Schofield, Regional Weeds Coordinator on 4724 2153.

Kind regards,

 13th January 2020

Graham Wilson
Manager, Biosecurity & Emergency Services and
Deputy Chair, Greater Sydney Regional Weed Committee