

Policy Title:	AQUATIC PLANT MANAGEMENT POLICY
Policy Subject:	Assets
Policy No:	#2289701v5 – CP060
Directorate:	Infrastructure Services
Department:	Infrastructure Planning
Section:	Operations
Responsible Officer:	Executive Manager Infrastructure Planning
Authorised by:	Director Infrastructure Services
Adopted Date:	05/12/2012
Review Date:	27/09/2020
Amended Date:	27/09/2017
Risk Assessment:	Low

OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of the policy is to provide a framework and direction for the coordinated management of aquatic plants in the Fraser Coast catchments. It identifies priorities and management actions to be undertaken over the next five (5) years to achieve the project objectives.

This policy will assist Council in its management of aquatic plants in water bodies such as stormwater lakes and lagoons under Council's control including:

- Parks and open space
- Reserves
- Watercourses
- Community Land

The Aquatic Plant Management Policy applies to aquatic plants in urban waterways throughout the region. The policy will be implemented in association with Council's Structure Plans, Urban Design Frameworks, Master Plans, Management Policy – Urban Lakeside Vegetation and Catchment Studies. The policy does not apply to water bodies located on private property throughout the region.

This policy has been developed based on detailed review of government and industry research and published management plans and strategies. It has had consultation with internal sections of Council.

The main objectives are to reduce the impacts of aquatic weeds on water quality, biodiversity and infrastructure, and to achieve high quality water bodies that require minimal resource input, and improved environmental and social benefits through the following objectives:

1. Identify and monitor aquatic plant growth in the Fraser Coast water bodies
 2. Prioritise areas for strategic control of aquatic plants within the Fraser Coast water bodies
 3. Implement an assessment methodology and response to infestations
 4. Implement best practise aquatic plant control
 5. Promote community awareness and ownership of aquatic plant management issues
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6. Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the strategy (effectiveness of control strategies, awareness raising activities)

POLICY:**Philosophy**

To ensure that aquatic plants management practices are provided in an equitable manner to manage and maintain the health of the existing aquatic environment while managing risk to people, property and infrastructure. Council's management approach will be based on merit and risk assessment, to deliver net community benefit and contribute to the long term enhancement and improvement of ecological, economic and social benefits.

Authorities & Responsibilities

Council Officers will make an assessment of the request for the removal of aquatic plants on Council managed water bodies in accordance with the policy.

The Chief Executive Officer has delegated authority to authorise the removal of aquatic plants in accordance with the provisions of the policy.

Scope & Activities**1. Benefits of Aquatic Plants**

Aquatic plants rely on water quality and environmental inputs for their growth and health, and can allow for a pleasing aesthetic environment when the ecosystem is healthy and balanced. They provide habitat and food for fauna, and assist in the uptake of nutrients and capture of sediments prior to entering sensitive receiving waters.

Sustainable management of aquatic plants should maintain or improve the aquatic plant populations. Methods for improving water quality and aquatic ecosystem health include:

- Facilitate the removal of severe infestations that are a danger or potential hazard to the function of the system that are unable to be effectively managed through other recognised weed management practices.
- Conserve aquatic plants that are native, ecologically beneficial species, and have amenity value.
- Promote biodiversity and conserve the ecosystem.
- Optimise the use of aquatic plant material as products of management.
- Consider biodiversity value, shade and temperature, water quality, wildlife, and character.

2. Why Manage Aquatic Plants

Aquatic and riparian plants provide many benefits. However, aquatic plant outbreaks can cause a number of impacts including:

- Damage to infrastructure
- Reducing water quality
- Reducing aquatic biodiversity
- Increase in nutrient loads through vegetative mass
- Reduced aesthetic value

- Increased ability to translocate declared weeds to other water bodies

Aquatic plants perform beneficial functions within the urban environment, but are a visible link to the health and wellbeing of the environment and the community.

3. Aquatic Plant Removal on Council Land/Reserves

3.1 Aquatic Plant Removal Requests by Residents

The growth of the Fraser Coast region is putting pressure not only on infrastructure, but has also attracted increasing views and demands on the management expectations of water bodies, whether natural or built. This policy aims to achieve a balance between conflicting demands through appropriate intervention levels and maintenance practices.

3.2 Aquatic Plant Removal

The Council recognises the aesthetic and environment aspects of aquatic plants. It also recognises that in some cases the removal of aquatic plants may not be desirable or feasible given the condition, location, species of aquatic plant, impacts, or the achievement of other Council objectives. Aquatic plant removal will be assessed against multiple criteria for merit and priority.

3.3 Requests for Aquatic Plant Removal

All requests for the removal of aquatic plants will be assessed in an objective and professional manner. Management decisions won't solely be based on reasons such as visual amenity or unsubstantiated environmental claims. Council Officers will assess the request and explore all feasible options for resolving problems associated with aquatic plants in order to appropriately manage aquatic plant growth.

3.4 Criteria for Assessment of Aquatic Plant Removal

Generally, it is Council's policy not to remove non-declared or non-impacting aquatic plants. All possible solutions and management options will be explored to resolve the problem rather than the removal of the aquatic plants.

Council's policy is to avoid the removal of aquatic plants except where:

- The aquatic plant is identified in Council's Biosecurity Program 2016-2021
 - The aquatic plant has been assessed as a risk to, or is causing damage to, infrastructure or to public safety and is unable to be managed through other recognised aquatic plant management practices,
 - The aquatic plant is adversely impacting on ecosystem health and alternative management options are not feasible,
 - The aquatic plant is interfering or in conflict with other Council policies,
 - The aquatic plant has been identified as posing a long term risk, or
 - No other reasonable alternative for management is practical.
- 4.** Council has an obligation under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* to take reasonable steps to control invasive aquatic plant pests in the region. Council officers will assess known infestations and take the appropriate action to manage or eradicate where possible.

5. Budget and Resources

Budgetary considerations will directly impact on the programmed work schedule for water body management actions. Therefore, the prioritisation method is critical for allocating available resources to deliver an effective and efficient management program.

6. Management Principles

Managing aquatic plants in our existing water bodies should be a priority in the planning and design of stormwater management. Proper design of stormwater treatments, such as Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD), and of waterways benefits the management and maintenance of our catchments and aquatic environments. Effective measures to reduce waterway pollutant and sediment loads within the catchment are a major factor in reducing aquatic plant outbreaks.

An integrated approach is required in the Fraser Coast for the effective long-term management of aquatic plants. Raising awareness with stakeholders will aid in improving knowledge of aquatic plants and ecosystems in both urban and rural environments, and current treatment methods. In managing aquatic plant infestations in our water bodies, the following management principles will be considered:

- Confirm aquatic plant species
- Contain infestations of undesirable species
- Identify the source of infestations
- Consider seasonal implications for the timing of control methods
- Record changes and map infestations
- Assess priority and available resources
- Allow for ongoing control and follow-up
- Monitor control treatments to establish their effectiveness
- Identify nutrient sources
- Early detection surveys carried out regularly
- Identify vectors or pathways for spread
- Understanding of the ecological impact of controlling aquatic plants

7. Aquatic Plant Management Options

Aquatic plant species behaviour is critical in understanding effective methods of control. Any disruption of the ecosystem in a water body will trigger an effect.

Each water body needs to be assessed to determine the most suitable management actions in line with this policy and relevant legislation, which may include a combination of best management options including:

- Biological control,
- Physical control,
- Mechanical or weed harvester control,
- Chemical control, in specific and limited circumstances, or
- No action/Monitoring.

8. Aquatic Plant Removal on Private Land

Aquatic plant management on private land should be conducted by the landholder in accordance with the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. Residents should contact Council's Vector and Pest Management section for more information.

9. Prioritisation of Works

Assessment Criteria

Prioritising aquatic plant control activities requires a balanced approach that recognises the benefits and risks of management practices. A number of factors need to be considered when prioritising control activities, and should be based on ecological management principles recognising a top of catchment down approach; these factors include:

- Existing infestation of declared aquatic weeds,
- Location of infestation within the catchment,
- Size of infestation,
- Safety,
- Potential for further spread,
- Potential impact on ecological values,
- Potential impact on infrastructure,
- Season/timing for efficient control,
- Site constraints,
- Access to the water body,
- Access within the water body,
- Management options,
- Locations with community/recreational access,
- Landholder participation and contribution,
- Nutrient loads,
- Hydraulic characteristics i.e. slow moving/ponded, or
- Availability of resources including financial and staff

RELATED LEGISLATION:

Jurisdiction	Relevant policy, legislative and planning frameworks (not limited to the following list):
International	Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar 1971)
National	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> Australian Weeds Strategy Weeds of National Significance Strategies
State	<i>Local Government Act 2009</i> <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> <i>Biosecurity Regulation 2016</i> Queensland Weeds and Pest Animal Strategy 2016-20 <i>Vegetation Management Act 1999</i> <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i> <i>Water Act 2000</i> <i>Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Act 1994</i> <i>Planning Act 2016</i>
Regional	Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan (2011) Wide Bay Burnett Environment and Natural Resource Management Plan 2012-2031
Local	Fraser Coast Biosecurity Program 2016-2021

RELATED DOCUMENTS (LOCAL LAWS, POLICIES, DELEGATIONS, ETC):

References:

Burnett/Kolan/Baffle Catchments Aquatic Weed Working Group, 2010, *Aquatic Weed Control Strategic Plan, Burnett-Kolan-Baffle-Elliott-Gregory-Isis Catchments*.

Mary River Pest Management Group, June 2009, *Mary River Aquatic Weed Strategy*.

Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, 2006, *Australian Weeds Strategy, A national strategy for weed management in Australia*.

New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, November 2008, *Aquatic weed management in waterways and dams*, Prime facts 30.

New South Wales Department of Industry and Investment, 2009, *WeedED Resources*.

ATTACHMENTS TO POLICY:

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DEFINITIONS:

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HISTORY:

Amended: 27/09/17