



Education and Training Benchmarks for Macquarie Invasive Species Project



Levels of weed management vary at each LCA but most can be classified into the following categories:

- Operator or Spray Operator or any other multi-job with more than 30% of time dedicated to weed management
- Weeds Officer or Inspector
- Senior or Chief Weeds Officer
- Supervisor or Manager with more than 30% of time dedicated to weed management

The following roles and responsibilities for each of these categories have been adapted from the “Noxious Weeds Handbook for Councils and Councillors”:

Operator or Spray Operator	<p>Knowledge of noxious weeds for the Local Control Area. Ability to identify different species of plants. Ability to follow OH&S procedures. Ability to apply herbicides. Ability to maintain required records of chemical use, e.g. chemical record sheets. Ability to participate in workplace communications, e.g. complete inspection reports. Knowledge of and the ability to use vehicles machinery and specialised equipment. Ability to inspect, clean and maintain council plant. Ability to operate in isolated and remote locations. Ability to provide basic first aid. Knowledge of council’s policies and procedures.</p>
Weeds Officer or Inspector	<p>Ability to recommend the issuing of infringements under the <i>Noxious Weeds Act 1993</i>. Knowledge of and ability to prepare and apply herbicides. Ability to read and interpret maps. Ability to monitor local weed management strategies. Ability to respond to emergencies. Ability to cost jobs and prepare quotes for private work. Ability to work without supervision. Ability to meet deadlines. Ability to plan and coordinate work site activities. Ability to respond to community requests or complaints and deal with conflict. Ability to participate in workplace communications, i.e. prepare reports, give formal presentations and participate in meetings.</p>
Senior or Chief Weeds Officer AND Supervisor or Manager	<p>Ability to manage the implementation of legislation. Ability to develop council policy. Ability to liaise with and facilitate local community groups and organisations. Ability to oversee the implementation of council’s noxious weeds program. Ability to develop and implement weed awareness programs. Ability to effectively manage, motivate and assess the performance of staff. Ability to organise and conduct meetings. Ability to conduct one-on-one training. Ability to prepare grant applications. Ability to prepare and submit annual reports to council. Ability to prepare budgets and financial plans and operate within them. Ability to advise on best practice management options for weeds. Ability to plan and implement chemical use programs. Ability to define a pest problem by carrying out biological surveys, etc. Ability to prepare a local weed management strategy. Ability to monitor and evaluate local weed management strategies. Ability to collect and manage data. Ability to liaise effectively with other Local Control Areas and government agencies. Ability to source goods, services and contractors.</p>

The Conservation and Land Management Package, offered through Tocal College, addresses the training needs of weed control assistants, weed spray operators, weed control officers, weed control contractors, community group members and volunteers, park rangers, bush regenerators, landholders, government advisers, and managers for weed management programs at all levels. This course is nationally recognised and is aligned with the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF).

<u>Qualification</u>	<u>AQF level</u>
Certificate II	2
Certificate III	3
Certificate IV	4
Diploma	5

The NSW Weeds Training Program was created to directly address the skills and qualifications required by weed officers and other levels of weed management. This program is continuously being updated and adapted to suit the advances in weed management. It offers many courses relevant to all levels of weed management. These courses can count towards a certificate in Conservation and Land Management (CLM) or be taken on their own as required.

Macquarie Valley Weeds Advisory Committee and what was then NSW Agriculture worked together to develop the Skills Recognition Program for the weed control industry in 1999. It was important to formally recognise the skills and professionalism that weed officers bring to the job. Through this program, many weed officers have been awarded a certificate in CLM based on an assessment of their current skills and experience, without having to undertake any further training.

Recommendation

The Macquarie Valley has long supported education and training for weed officers, and now wants to show an increased commitment by setting benchmarks for each level of weed management. Macquarie Invasive Species Project (MISP) participating partners have already committed to attending training courses each year until 2015 through setting targets in the MISP funding submission.

By using the above training programs, MISP members aim to reach the following benchmarks by 2015:

Qualification	AQF level	Position title
Certificate II	2	Operator or Spray Operator
Certificate III	3	Weeds Officer or Inspector
Certificate IV	4	
Diploma	5	Senior or Chief Weeds Officer AND Supervisor or Manager

OR

Maintain equivalent skills and qualifications that could be used to attain these certification levels under the skills recognition program.