Upper Hunter County Council

Business Activity Strategic Plan

2025-2035

Prepared in accordance with provisions contained in the Local Government Act 1993 and Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

The following definitions and abbreviations are used in the Upper Hunter County Council Business Activity Strategic Plan:

BASP	Upper Hunter County Council Business Activity Strategic Plan
Constituent Councils	means Muswellbrook Shire Council, Singleton Council and Upper Hunter Shire Councils collectively. These local government areas constitute the area of operation for the Upper Hunter County Council.
Council	Upper Hunter County Council
County Council	Upper Hunter County Council
GDB	General Biosecurity Duty as it applies to weeds in the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015
HRSWMP	Hunter Regional Strategic Weed Management
Invasive Plant(s)	Plants which have been regionally prioritised by the **HRSWMP** or contained in **Biosecurity Act 2015** and associated regulations for the area of operation of the Upper Hunter County Council.
LCA	means Upper Hunter County Council as a **Local Control Authority** under Sec 370 Biosecurity Act 2015.
LGA 1993	NSW Local Government Act 1993
NSW DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industries
NBA 2015	NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015
UHCC	Upper Hunter County Council
UHWA	Upper Hunter Weeds Authority, the Upper Hunter County Council's registered trading name

County Council Contact Details

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1. Purpose of Business Activity Strategic Plan

The Upper Hunter County Council is required to develop a Business Activity Strategic Plan which in accordance with Clause 219, Local Government (General) Regulation 2021:

a) identifies the main business activity priorities of the council covering a period of at least 10 years from when the plan is endorsed, and

b) establishes strategic objectives together with strategies for achieving those objectives, and

c) has been developed having due regard to the community strategic plans of the county council's constituent councils and in consultation with those councils.

2. County Council Overview

County Council- Vision and Mission Statements

Vision

To prevent, contain or reduce the biosecurity risk of invasive plants to the environment, economy and community within the County.

Mission

To provide effective management of priority invasive plants utilizing the latest technology to all Constituent Councils fairly and equitably in accordance with the **Biosecurity Act, 2015.**

The Upper Hunter County Council (**UHCC**) is a single purpose Council which is the Local Control Authority **(LCA)** responsible for the fulfilment of its **Constituent Council's** functions for weeds regarding the **Biosecurity Act, 2015** ***(*see note* 1)**. The **County Council's** governance is in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 **(LGA 1993)** with the County Council being first proclaimed on 1 January 1991. The present area of operation of **UHCC** is the local government areas of Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook, and Singleton. These Councils are located at the northern end of the Hunter Valley, New South Wales.

2.1 Governing Body

As a County Council under the **LGA 1993**, **UHCC** is required to have a governing body made up of elected representatives of its Constituent Councils. Part 5 of Local Government Act 1993 ***(*see note 2)*** outlines the formation and operation of County Councils. The application of **LGA 1993** to **UHCC** is outlined in Section 400, **LGA 1993**.

The **UHCC** governing body meets the quarterly, February, May, August and November. The election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson occurs biennially at Council's November meeting. **Constituent Council** delegates are elected by their Council after each Council general election and represent their Council on the **UHCC** for four years. The number of representatives for each **Constituent Council**s is currently Upper Hunter Shire 3 Members, Muswellbrook 2 Members and Singleton 2 Members. The number of delegates from each Constituent Council is contained in the proclamation declaring the County Council.

***Note 1: Sec 371, Functions of local control authority, Biosecurity Act 2015 contained in Appendix A**
***Note 2: Part 5, Local Government Act 1993 contained in Appendix B**

2.2 County Council Core Business Activities

The core role of the County Council is the enforcement of control of priority invasive plants on both private and public lands. The County Council trades as Upper Hunter Weeds Authority **(UHWA)** with its administration office located at 2/13 Thomas Mitchell Drive, Muswellbrook, New South Wales.

The diverse range of climatic conditions within the region exposes it to large range of invasive plants which have the potential of establishing themselves within the region. The weed species that have this potential to become a serious threat include Parthenium Weed, Harrisia Cactus, Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needle Grass in the upper reaches of the Hunter Valley and Cabomba, Senegal Tea, Alligator Weed and Salvinia in lower parts of the Upper Hunter.

The County Council prioritises Invasive plant species for enforcement and control using the NSW Weed Risk Management System (**WRM**). The WRM system provides a standard, nationally accepted and transparent process to help make decisions about prioritising weed species and determining appropriate management responses. The Weed Risk Management system considers two scoring components for prioritising weeds for management action:

1. A weed risk assessment (invasiveness, impacts, potential distribution)
2. An assessment of the feasibility of coordinated control (control costs, persistence, and current distribution)

An assessment of these components provides a management objective that reflects the principles of effective weed management, and links with the objectives of the Biosecurity Act 2015. The matrix below (Figure 1) illustrates how the results from a WRM review determines the control actions for a plant which are outlined in Table 1.

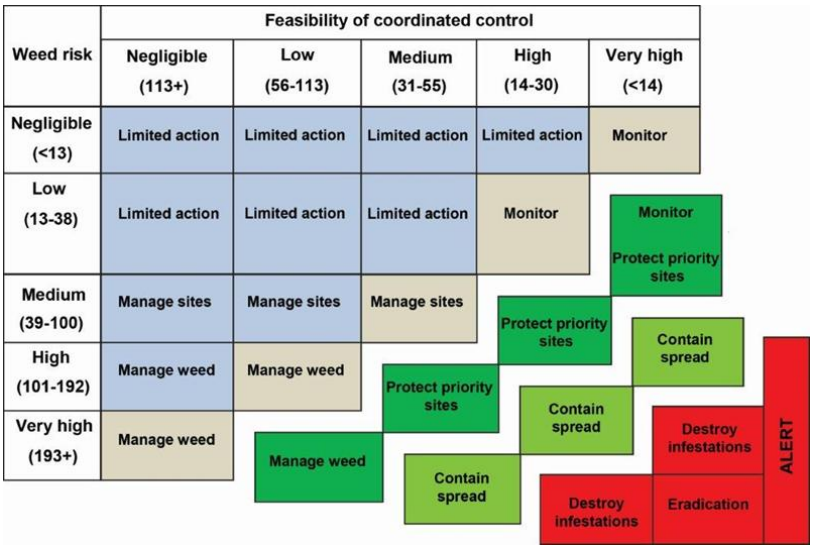

Figure 1: NSW WRM Matrix (NSW DPI)

Table 1: WRM Control Categories and Actions

Category	Action
Alert	Species that are not known to be present in the geographic area being considered and which represent a significant threat.
Eradication	Remove the weed species from the geographic area being considered
Destroy infestations	Significantly reduce the extent of the weed species in the geographic area being considered
Contain spread	Prevent the ongoing spread of the weed species in the geographic area being considered
Protect priority sites	Prevent the spread of the weed species to key sites/assets of high economic, environmental and/or social value
Manage weed	Reduce the overall economic, environmental and/or social impacts of the weed species through targeted management
Manage sites	Maintain the overall economic, environmental and/or social value of key sites/assets through improved general weed management
Monitor	Detect any significant changes in the species' weed risk
Limited action	The weed species would only be targeted for coordinated control in the geographic area being considered if its local presence makes it likely to spread to land uses where it ranks as a higher priority

Along with climate variation, the risk of new weed incursions occurring within the region is compounded by the presence of major freight and transport corridors, New England & Golden Highways and Northern Rail Line. More than 9,000 vehicles, of which approximately 2,000 are heavy vehicles, pass through the region daily. The region's rail system annually transports approximately 100 million tons of coal as well wheat and other agricultural produce from the Northern NSW. The region is also the location of two major Australia Defence Force facilities, the Infantry Training School at Singleton and Myambat munitions storage centre located near Denman. Both facilities receive and dispatch personal and equipment to various Defence Force bases and training sites throughout the eastern states of Australia

The Upper Hunter also contains a highly developed viticulture industry, is a major breeding centre for the Thoroughbred Horse Industry and home to extensive grazing and dairy enterprises. The region has sixteen (16) coal mines with most using the open cut mining method. Land which is undergoing rehabilitation after this mining practice is particularly vulnerable to invasion from invasive plant species.

The region also has several aquatic features at risk from new invasive weed incursions. These features include the Hunter & Goulburn Rivers, which transverse the region and three major water impoundments, Glenbawn Dam, Lake Liddell, and Lake St Clair.

To protect the viability of these valuable industries and to facilitate the delivery of the County Council functions as the **LCA, UHCC** has historically, conducted an extensive detection and public awareness programs in the regards to

Invasive Plants. To manage these programs, Council's Delivery and annual Operation plans mainly focuses on operational activities

These programs are conducted by Council's five (5) fulltime employees who have specialised training and qualifications in invasive plant control. These Staff are based in districts within each of the three **Constituent Council** areas and are responsible for day-to-day operations in their allocated districts.

To coordinate this inspection program, Council has for over the last 20 years used various computer-based record keeping systems to keep track of the inspection program and to generate reports for **Constituent Councils** and NSW Government Departments. In 2005 Council adopted the WeedMap systems, which allows Council Staff to electronically collect inspection information in the field, via laptop computers. One of the features of this system is it allowed staff to accurately identify properties with this GPS enabled mapping system.

This system has the following features:

- A semi-automatic synchronisation process. This process only requires a connection to the internet and allows Council's remote sites to update inspection and treatment records daily. This process also not only allows the field units to retain all of their collected inspection and infestation data but also received the data collected by all other Staff members. This includes the shared visual display of the inspection and infestation records through the transfer of the mapping data through the synchronisation process.

- The ability of staff to access to all of Council's inspection records in the field allows for better coordination of joint inspection programs between staff and eliminates doubling up of property inspections on district boundaries.

Electronic recording and transferring of day-to-day workplace required records such as Activity Risk Assessments has been included as required fields in all activities.

3. Area of Operation

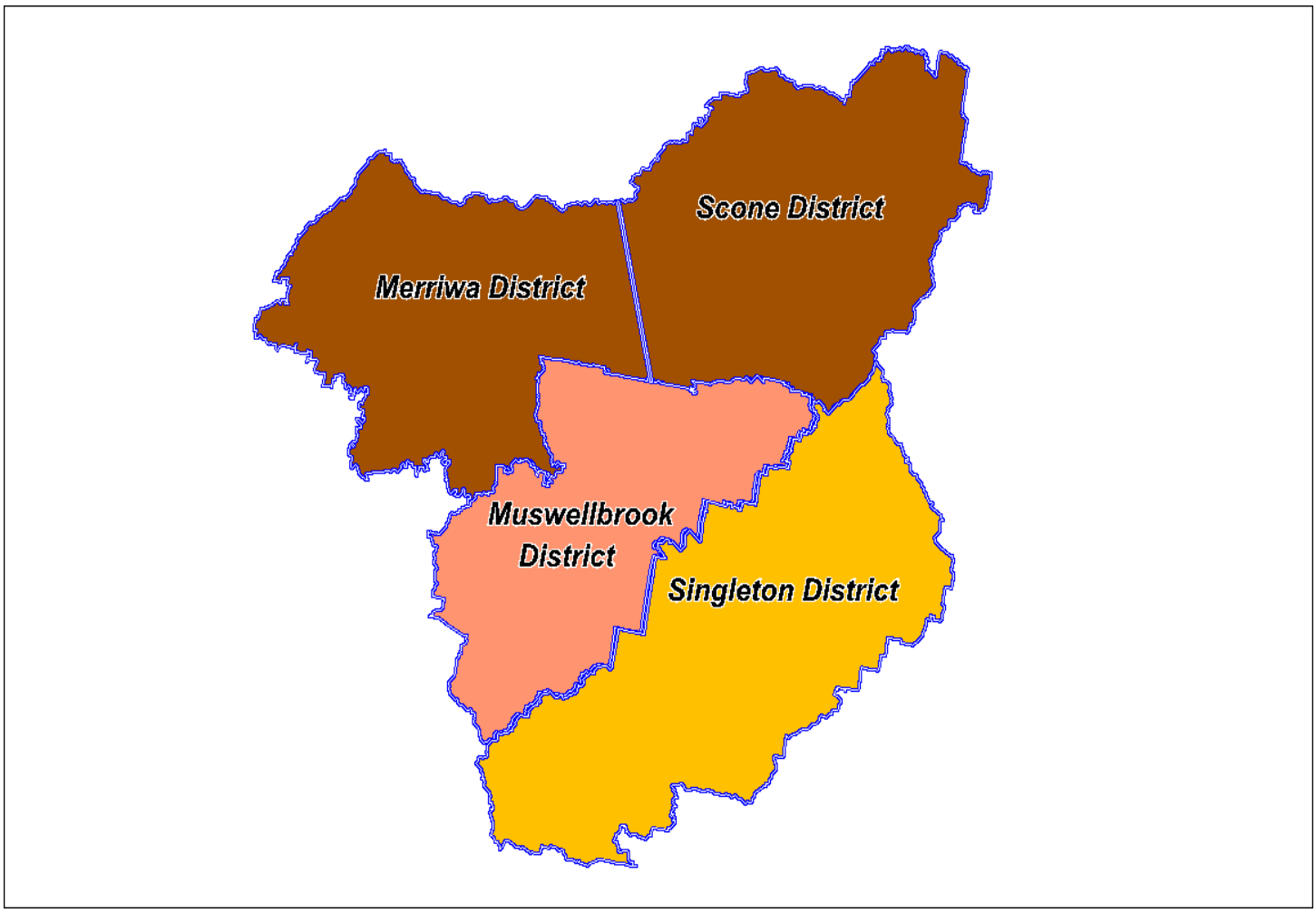

Figure 2: UHCC Area of Operation

Upper Hunter Shire Council

Muswellbrook Shire Council

Singleton Council

UHCC area of operation comprises an area of approximately 1,636,719 ha with a population of around 50 000 people. The region has a diverse topographical range, from the temperate rainforest of the Barrington Tops to the semi-coastal regions of the lower Hunter River Valley and contains over 500,000 ha of National Park and Nature Reserves.

4. Principal Activities

4.1 Control of Invasive Plants

Program Goals

- To ensure that regionally prioritised **Invasive Plants** are controlled on public roads, recreation areas and other lands controlled by Constituent Councils in accordance with the Hunter Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan.

Objectives

1. Undertake effective and efficient control works on regionally prioritised **Invasive Plants** on public lands under the control of constituent Councils
2. Reduce the risk from **Invasive Plants** which are poisonous to humans and animals on public lands.

4.2 Inspection of Properties

Program Goals

- To inspect public and private properties and to advise land managers on the implementation of **Invasive Plant** control programs in accordance with their **GBD** under **Biosecurity Act, 2015.**
- To report the existence, type and extent of **Invasive Plant** infestations.
- To monitor the effectiveness of each land manager's noxious plant control program.
- Where control programs are not put in place or are ineffective commence compliance action under the **Biosecurity Act, 2015**.

Objectives

1. Systematically conduct inspections of properties, high risk sites and pathways in accordance with targets detailed in Council's Delivery and annual Operation plans.
2. Prevent the sale and transport of **Invasive Plants**.
3. Re-inspect properties who are or should be undertaking **Invasive Plant** control programs in accordance with their **GBD**.
4. Advise, co-ordinate and implement **Invasive Plant** control programs

4.3 Community Awareness and Engagement

Program Goals

- To promote an effective level of understanding of weed awareness and management strategies amongst all stakeholders.

- To maintain membership of and/or provide assistance to:

  (i) Constituent Councils
  (ii) Weeds Advisory Groups.
  (iii) Neighbouring Councils.
  (iv) Landcare Groups.
  (v) Associated Weed Professional Associations.
  (vi) Department of Primary Industries and other State Government Bodies.
  (vii) C.S.I.R.O. and other Federal Government Bodies.

Objectives

1. Develop awareness of **Invasive Plants** and promote good weed management practices using integrated weed management strategies and develop Weed Management Plans for Weeds of regional importance.

2. Participate in regional advisory groups, campaigns and surveys being conducted by stakeholders with weed control interests

4.4 Governance

Program Goals

- To ensure effective and continuous communication, co-ordination and co-operation with each **Constituent Council** and the Department of Primary Industries.

- To secure the appropriate level of contributions and grants from **Constituent Councils** and Department of Primary Industries, sufficient to achieve **Council's** Goals and Objectives.

- Ensure that the County Council complies with its Legislative Reporting and Planning obligations.

Objectives

1. Provide ongoing information to Constituent Councils and the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

2. Achieve Management Planning Practices

3. Ensure level of Grant Funding is maintained

4. Ensure Council Policies and Procedures up to date and current

5. Resourcing Strategy

The Resourcing Strategy is made up of the following three (3) elements: -

1. Long-Term Financial Plan
2. Workforce Management Plan
3. Asset Management Plan

5.1 Long-Term Financial Plan 2025-35

5.1.1 Income

UHCC has two main sources of income: **Constituent Council** Contributions and Grants from Government agencies. The majority of grant funds received by UHCC annually is in the form of the NSW Weed Action Plan **(WAP)** Grant. Council also acts as banker for the Professional Wild Dog Control Program (**PWDCP**) and NSW Biological Control Taskforce **(BCT)** are included in income and expenditure for the **UHCC.**

Other sources of income include Fees for Private Works and Interest.

The approximate percentages of operational income sources represent to the **UHCC's** total income (excluding **BCT** funds) are:

- **Constituent Council** Contribution 45%
- Grants 39%
- Other Income 16%

5.1.2 Expenditure

Excluding the disbursement of grant funding **UHCC**'s main area of operational expenditure is employee costs. After excluding grant disbursement, these costs traditionally represent approximately 60% the County Council's operating costs (excluding grant disbursement).

The County Council's other major area of operational expenditure is its materials and contract costs. These costs are inflated in the first 4years of 10-year estimates due the inclusion of **BCT and PWDCP** funds. It is expected that these funds will be fully disbursed by July 2028.

5.1.3 Employee Provisions

UHCC has a goal of having 100% of its employee provisions being always fully funded. However, short term cash flow events from time to time may affect the ability of Council to maintain its desired funding percentage of provisions. The 100 % funded position has been taken by Council because with only a small number of employees (5), there is risk that most or all of the employees could resign in a short period of time. In this eventually, and if the provisions could not be funded from cash reserves, Council may have to source funding from **Constituent Councils** or sell assets to fund these provisions.

5.1.4 Risk Analysis

The major risk to the continuing solvency of the **UHCC** is the reliance on grants, in particular the NSW Department of Primary Industries **(DPI)** annual grant program. These grants have historically been allocated annually; however these grants are subject to NSW Government annual budget allocations. Although the Regional Weed Action Plan (**WAP**) grant system initiated in 2010/11, offers some certainty in this income source as these plans cover five-year periods, this grant is still subject to NSW State Government annual budgets.

A critical assumption of Council future financial planning is the need for Grant funds along with **Constituent Council** contributions to increase annually in line with the operating costs in particular employee costs. Council has actively sought to increase income from other sources such as private works and other grant sources, however if operational activities connect to these other sources of income need to be substantially increased to cover the gap in traditional funding, **UHCC** will be forced to review it's the level of its core business operational activities and staffing levels.

5.1.5 Estimate Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made when formulating the BASP projected financial statements:

- Grants and Contributions increase annually by 3%
- Employee Costs increase annually by 3%

5.1.6 Plan Review

The Financial Plan is updated annually as part development of the **UHCC** annual operational plan.

5.1.7 Projected Financial Statements 2025-2035

The following tables contain the **UHCC** projected Income and Expenditure, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow Statements for the period 2025/26 to 2034/35-

Table 2: Projected Income and Expenditure Statement 2025/26 – 2034/35

	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	2032-2033	2033-2034	2034-2035
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Income										
Rates and Annual Charges										
User Charges and Fees	73	80	81	81	82	83	84	85	85	86
Interest and Investment Revenue	30	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Other Revenues		-								
Grants and Contributions- Operating	863	882	904	927	950	974	988	1,024	1,050	1,076
Grants and Contributions- Capital		-								
Net Gain from the Sale of Assets	4	5	0	11			1			
Total Income from continuing operations	**970**	**992**	**1,010**	**1,044**	**1,057**	**1,082**	**1,098**	**1,134**	**1,160**	**1,187**
Expense		-								
Employee Costs	587	605	623	642	661	681	701	722	744	766
Borrowing Costs		-								
Materials & Contracts	614	600	551	381	250	272	265	294	304	348
Deprecation	66	68	68	66	68	70	66	64	60	53
Other Expenses	4	4	5	5	5	5	5			
Interest and Investment Losses										
Net Loss From Disposal of Assets						2		1	1	
Total Expenses from continuing operations	**1,272**	**1,278**	**1,246**	**1,093**	**984**	**1,027**	**1,037**	**1,081**	**1,108**	**1,167**
Operating Result from continuing operations	(302)	(286)	(236)	(49)	73	55	61	53	52	20

Table 3: Projected Statement of Financial Position for the 10-year period 2025/26-2034/35

	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	2032-2033	2033-2034	2034-2035
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
ASSETS										
Current Assets										
Cash & Cash Equivalents	1,070	746	395	222	224	237	254	256	283	235
Investments										
Receivables	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Inventories	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43
Other	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Non-current assets classified as held for sale		-								
Total Current Assets	**1,141**	**817**	**466**	**293**	**295**	**308**	**325**	**327**	**354**	**306**
Non-Current Assets		-								
Investments		-								
Receivables		-								
Inventories		-								
Infrastructure, Property, Plant & Equipment	515	556	546	542	548	558	537	510	497	440
Investment Property		-								
Intangible Assets		-								
Right of Use assets	42	43	45	46	48	49	50	52	53	55
Total Non-Current Assets	**557**	**600**	**590**	**588**	**595**	**606**	**587**	**562**	**550**	**495**
TOTAL ASSETS	**1,698**	**1,417**	**1,057**	**881**	**890**	**915**	**912**	**889**	**904**	**801**
LIABILITIES										
Current Liabilities										
Payables	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
Contract Liabilities										
Lease Liabilities	42	43	45	46	48	49	50	52	53	55
Borrowings		-								
Provisions	248	272	190	135	151	168	187	206	226	247
Total Current Liabilities	**312**	**338**	**257**	**205**	**174**	**189**	**206**	**223**	**241**	**260**
Non-Current Liabilities		-								
Payables		-								
Borrowings		-								
Provisions		-								
Total Non-Current Liabilities										
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**312**	**338**	**257**	**205**	**174**	**189**	**206**	**223**	**241**	**260**
NET ASSETS	**1,385**	**1,079**	**800**	**676**	**716**	**726**	**707**	**666**	**663**	**541**
EQUITY										
Retained Earnings	1,385	1,079	800	676	716	726	707	666	663	541
Revaluation Reserves										
Council Equity Interest										
Minority Equity Interest										
TOTAL EQUITY	**1,385**	**1,079**	**800**	**676**	**716**	**726**	**707**	**666**	**663**	**541**

Table 4 : Projected Cash Flow Statement for the 10 year period 2025/26-2034/35

	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031	2031-2032	2032-2033	2033-2034	2034-2035
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Cash Flows from Operating Activities										
Receipts:										
Rates & Annual Charges										
User Charges & Fees	73	80	81	81	82	83	84	85	85	86
Investment & Interest Revenue Received	30	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Grants & Contributions	863	882	904	927	950	974	988	1,024	1,050	1,076
Bonds & Deposits Received										
Other										
Payments:										
Employee Benefits & On-Costs	(587)	(605)	(623)	(642)	(661)	(681)	(701)	(722)	(744)	(766)
Materials & Contracts	(614)	(600)	(551)	(381)	(250)	(272)	(265)	(294)	(304)	(348)
Decrease in ELE			(83)	(55)	(33)					
Other										
Net Cash provided (or used in) Operating Activities	**(235)**	**(218)**	**(246)**	**(45)**	**113**	**129**	**131**	**118**	**112**	**73**
Cash Flows from Investing Activities										
Receipts:										
Sale of Infrastructure, Property, Plant & Equipment	52	52	46	56	56	57	58	60	30	60
Other Investing Activity Receipts										
Payments:										
Purchase of Infrastructure, Property, Plant & Equipment	(110)	(114)	(106)	(138)	(120)	(124)	(122)	(124)	(62)	(126)
Other Investing Activity Payments										
Principal component of lease payments	(42)	(43)	(45)	(46)	(48)	(49)	(50)	(52)	(53)	(55)
Net Cash provided (or used in) Investing Activities	**(100)**	**(105)**	**(105)**	**(128)**	**(112)**	**(116)**	**(114)**	**(116)**	**(85)**	**(121)**
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash & Cash Equivalents	**(335)**	**(323)**	**(351)**	**(173)**	**2**	**13**	**17**	**2**	**27**	**(48)**
plus: **Cash & Cash Equivalents - beginning of year**	1,405	1,070	746	395	222	224	237	254	256	283
Cash & Cash Equivalents - end of the year	1,070	746	395	222	224	237	254	256	283	235
plus: **Investments on hand - end of year**										
Total Cash, Cash Equivalents & Investments	1,070	746	395	222	224	237	254	256	283	235

5.2 Workforce Management Plan 2025-2035

5.2.1 Staffing and Organisational Structure

The current staff structure of the Council consists of General Manager and four District Biosecurity Officers. When funding allows Council employs causal employees or contractors to conduct inspection/control programs.

The County Council's current structure is outline in Figure 3. The County Council expects that by 2028 that the organisational structure will be altered to include a Senior Biosecurity/Administration Officer position.

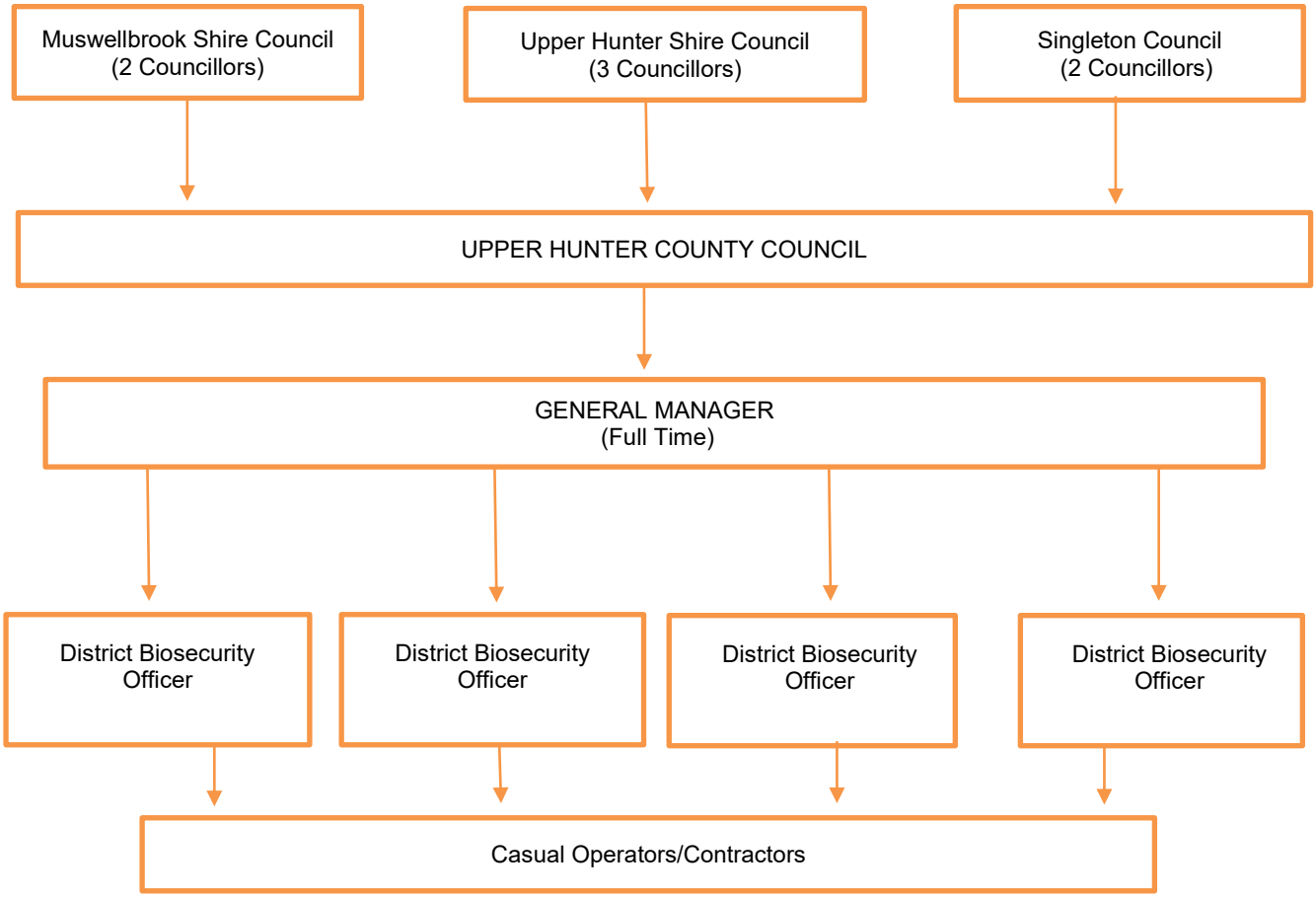

Figure 3: UHCC Current Organisational Structure

5.2.2 Operational Staff Duties and Responsibilities

General Manager

This position is currently a full-time position following the amalgamation of the General Manager and former Works Coordinator positions in June 2021. The General Manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration of **UHCC**, supervision of District Biosecurity Officers and overall management of the **UHCC** in accordance with **LGA 1993**.

District Biosecurity Officer

These positions are full time and whose duties include property inspections for the presence of **Invasive Plants** on private lands, control of **Invasive Plants** on council-controlled lands and public awareness programs in their designated districts.

Causal Operators/ Contractors

These positions are fill as needed and are reliant on Council receiving additional funding for control projects.

5.2.3 Employee Age and Service Profile

Council's current operational workforce age ranges from 28 to 73 years of age with two (2) employees having over 30 years' experience in the Local Government invasive plant control. It is expected that the employee age range for

the next four (4) years will change with retirements, with any new employees recruited expected to be between 30 to 50 years of age.

The use of retractable spray equipment and other technology has reduced the physical load of operational activities on employees which is a major consideration with the age of the current workforce. The scheduling of control activities on **Invasive Plants** during the cooler morning hours of summer months is an example of measures that Council undertakes to reduce heat load and fatigue on employees.

5.2.4 Training

Staff receive specialise training through the **NSW DPI** training program for weed officers. Council's training program is formulated by qualifications needed by employees to achieve a Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management (weeds). Three Staff currently have Certificate VI in government investigations and all Staff have received specialised training in the application of the Biosecurity Act 2015.

5.2.5 Staff Remuneration

Staff are currently remunerated in line with Mercer pay system. This system has two components with the first of half of the pay level-based staff achieving levels of competency for increases in remuneration. Once staff have completed all of their position's competencies, increases in remuneration can be achieved through performance.

5.2.6 Staff Recruitment and Retention Challenges

The **UHCC**'s location in the Hunter Valley has placed, and is expected to do so in the future, pressure on recruitment and retention through competition from the region's major industries Mining and Thoroughbred Breeding. This competitive employment environment, with the associated high cost and lack of availability of accommodation in most centres in the region, places further pressure on Council's ability to recruit and retain of staff.

Historically, **UHCC** staff turnover has been low, with only seven resignations and associated recruitments, in the past 20 years. During the period 2025-2029, Council is expecting the retirement of at least three staff members.

The main challenges that Council faces in retaining and recruiting staff is:

- Continual upward pressure on wages to retain existing staff and recruit prospective staff due to the wage structure of the mining and associated industries. With employee costs currently represent 60% of Council's total operating budget and the annual increase Council's traditional revenue sources being restricted, any large increase in wages with the current staffing structure would drastically affect Council's solvency. If this occurred, major organisational restructure would need to be initiated, include a review of staffing levels and core business activities.

- The high cost of accommodation affects Council's ability to recruit staff from outside the region. This compounded by the Council's logistical need to have staff reside in their principal district of operation. This may restrict the pool of prospective employees to those already residing in the district of operation.

- Due to the specialised qualifications and experience, mainly regarding the enforcement of the **NBA, 2015** it is unlikely that candidates for positions with the County Council will have the full skill set required.

5.2.8 Recruitment Strategy

Through the recruitment process, Council will be targeting prospective employees who have a rural or horticultural background who already reside in the prospective district area of operation or have sufficient resources to relocate to the area. One of the attributes of the operational positions with Council is that all the positions have high degree of self-management with employees responsible for the day-to-day operations in their designated operational districts. This positional attribute can be used by Council in recruitment process.

Due to the increasing use of technology by Council, prospective employees will need to familiar with information technology.

Sources for prospective employees include former Local Land Services staff, Local Government Staff, nursery staff and rural workers.

5.3 Asset Management Plan

UHCC assets presently consist of the operational vehicles, office equipment and plant used by staff on a day-to-day basis. Council has no fixed assets regarding buildings or other infrastructure.

5.3.1 Vehicles

Council currently maintains a fleet of five (5) vehicles. The County Council's strategy for the past 4 years has been to replace these vehicles biennially to minimise maintenance costs and maximise trade in values. This biannual plant replacement program is funded from the operational budget.

5.3.2 Spray Equipment

Council has five (5) vehicles mounted with Quikspray® spray units. These units are replaced every four (4) years which allows Council to maximise the resale value of these units. Council has found over the past ten (10) years that this replacement program has been in place, that there has been a strong demand for these units.

Council other major plant assets are Argo®, Side by Side ATV and a trailer mounted Steam Unit. The Argo is an amphibious vehicle is used by Authority staff to conduct treatments and inspections on infestations of aquatic weeds in the **UHCC** area of operation. The purpose-built Steam Unit is used in environmental sensitive areas and urban areas where the use of herbicides is restricted by legislation.

5.3.3 Depreciation

Depreciation of **UHCC**'s plant and equipment is calculated using the straight-line method to allocate an assets cost (net of residual values) over its estimated useful life

Estimated useful lives for **UHCC** plant and equipment include:

- Office Equipment 5 to 10 years
- Office Furniture 10 to 20 years
- Vehicles and equipment 5 to 8 years

The following Table 5 lists assets of **UHCC** as of 30 June 2025 with a value after depreciation greater than $1000.

Table 5: UHCC Current Assets- 30 June 2025

Asset	Depreciated Value
Phantom 4 Pro Drone	1,547
Steam Unit	6,643
Hansa C21 Woodchipper	3,200
Hexagon Boom spray Controller	7,088
Computer Equipment	20,928
Display Trailer	24,462
Quikspray - Units - 400 x 7	47,503
Kubota ATV	22,958
Toyota Hilux 4x4 SR – Causal Vehicle	21,512
Toyota Hilux 4x4 - Singleton	40499
Toyota Hilux 4x4 SR - Scone	41,400
Toyota Hilux 4x4 SR - Muswellbrook	40,500
Toyota Hilux 4x4 SR - Merriwa	38,707
Total	**316,947**

5.3.4 Asset Management Policy

UHCC Asset Management Policy is attached to the **BASP** as Appendix C.

5.3.5 Asset Replacement Plan

Table 6 outlines the Council's projected asset replacement plan for period 2025-2035

Table 6: Projected Asset Replacement Program 2025-2035

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Purchases										
Tablets	20				20					
Spray Units				48			64			
Drone	8									
Inspector Vehicles	55	110	114	58	118	120	60	122	124	62
Total Purchases	**83**	**110**	**114**	**106**	**138**	**120**	**124**	**122**	**124**	**62**
Sales										
Spray Units				20			28			
Inspector Vehicles	20	52	52	26	56	56	29	58	60	30
Total Sales	20	52	52	46	56	56	57	58	60	30

Appendix A – Section 371 Biosecurity Act 2015

371 Functions of local control authority

(1) A local control authority has the following functions, in relation to the land for which it is the local control authority—

(a) the prevention, elimination, minimisation and management of the biosecurity risk posed or likely to be posed by weeds,

(b) to develop, implement, co-ordinate and review weed control programs,

(c) to inspect land in connection with its weed control functions,

(d) to keep records about the exercise of the local control authority's functions under this Act,

(e) to report to the Secretary about the exercise of the local control authority's functions under this Act.

(2) Nothing in this section limits the functions of the Secretary under this Act in relation to the control of weeds in any area.

(3) A function of a local control authority under this Act is to be exercised in accordance with any requirements specified in the regulations and any directions (not inconsistent with the regulations) given by the Secretary.

Appendix B –Part 5 Local Government Act 1993

Part 5 County councils

383 Proposal to establish or dissolve a county council or amend its constitution

(1) A council, a county council, a public authority or the Director-General may make a proposal to the Minister to establish or dissolve a county council or to amend the constitution of a county council.

(2) The Minister may propose to establish or dissolve a county council or to amend the constitution of a county council.

384 Public notice to be given of a proposal

The Minister must give at least 28 days' public notice of a proposal made to the Minister that the Minister decides to proceed with or of a proposal initiated by the Minister.

385 Making of representations

Within the period of public notice, representations concerning the proposal may be made to the Minister by anyone affected by the proposal.

386 Minister's recommendation concerning the proposal

After considering all representations received concerning the proposal, the Minister may recommend to the Governor that the proposal be implemented, with or without modifications, or may decline to recommend that the proposal be implemented.

387 Formation of county councils

(1) The Governor may, by proclamation, establish county councils for the purposes of this Act.

(2) A proclamation under this section must contain the following particulars:

(a) the name of the county council,

(b) a description of the county council's area of operations,

(b1) the name of each council (referred to in this Part as a ***constituent council***) whose area lies wholly or partly within the county council's area of operations,

(c) the number of persons to be elected by each **Constituent Council** to the county council's governing body,

(d) a description of the county council's functions.

(3) A proclamation under this section conferring weed functions on a county council is to be made only with the concurrence of the Minister administering the *Biosecurity Act 2015*

388 Legal status of county councils

(1) A proclamation establishing a county council operates to constitute the county council as a body politic of the State with perpetual succession and the legal capacity and powers of an individual, both in and outside the State.

(2) A county council is not a body corporate (including a corporation).

(3) A county council does not have the status, privileges and immunities of the Crown (including the State and the Government of the State).

(4) A law of the State applies to and in respect of a county council in the same way as it applies to and in respect of a body corporate (including a corporation).

389 What is a county council's name?

The name of a county council is to be "X County Council", where "X" is the name specified by the proclamation.

390 Who comprise the governing body?

(1) A county council must have a governing body elected by its constituent councils.

(2) Provisions concerning the membership of a county council's governing body are to be as prescribed by the proclamation establishing the county council.

(3) A member of a county council is to be elected from among the councillors of the constituent councils in accordance with the regulations.

(4) The governing body of a county council is responsible for managing the affairs of the county council.

391 The chairperson

(1) The chairperson of a county council is the person elected to the office of chairperson by the members of the county council from among their number.

(2) The chairperson holds office for one year, subject to this Act.

(3) The office of chairperson:

(a) commences on the day the person elected to the office is declared to be so elected, and

(b) becomes vacant when the person's successor is declared to be elected to the office, or on the occurrence of a casual vacancy in the office.

391A What are the functions of the chairperson?

The role of the chairperson of a county council is:

(a) to preside at meetings of the county council, and

(b) to exercise such other functions of the county council as the county council determines.

392 Vacancy in office of member

(1) A member of a county council vacates that office on ceasing to be a councillor of a constituent council.

(2) This section does not limit the other circumstances in which a member of a county council vacates that office.

393 Area of operations of county council

The area of operations of a county council may, in accordance with a proclamation made for the purposes of this Part, comprise the whole or any part of one or more local government areas.

394 Functions of county council

(1) The functions of a county council may, in accordance with a proclamation made for the purposes of this Part, comprise any one or more of the functions of a council under this or any other Act.

(2) A council may not undertake a function conferred on a county council whose area of operations includes the whole or any part of the council's area, subject to the regulations or a proclamation made for the purposes of this Part.

(3) Subsection (2) does not prevent a council from exercising a function delegated to it by a county council.

394A County councils to consider regional strategies

A county council must, when exercising its functions, take into account any strategic regional priorities and other plans, programs, strategies and policies of a joint organisation that apply to any relevant part of the county council's area of operations or that are relevant to the county council's operational functions.

395 General Manager of county council

(1) A county council must employ a general manager.

(2) The general manager of a county council has the same functions in relation to the county council as the general manager of a council has in relation to the council.

396 How often does a county council meet?

A county council is required to meet at least 4 times each year.

397 Amendment and dissolution of county councils

(1) The Governor may, by proclamation, amend or revoke a proclamation in force under section 387 for the purpose of amending the constitution of, or of dissolving, a county council.

(2) A proclamation for the purpose of amending the constitution of a county council:

(a) may change the name of the county council, or

(b) may vary the county council's area of operations, or

(c) may vary the number of persons who comprise the county council's governing body, or

(c1) may vary the number of persons to be elected by each **Constituent Council** to the county council's governing body, or

(d) may vary the county council's functions.

398 Facilitating provisions of proclamations

A proclamation of the Governor for the purposes of this Part may include provisions of the same kind as are referred to in section 213.

399 Making of financial contributions by constituent councils

The regulations may make provision for or with respect to the making of financial contributions to a county council by the constituent councils, including the following:

- the purposes for which contributions may be made
- the circumstances in which contributions may be required
- the assessment of contributions
- the payment of contributions
- the recovery of contributions.

400 Application of Act to county councils

(1) This Act (except Part 1 and Divisions 1 and 2 of Part 2 of Chapter 9, Chapter 10, section 365 and the provisions of Chapter 15 concerning the making and levying of ordinary rates) applies:

(a) to county councils in the same way as it applies to councils, and

(b) to the members of county councils in the same way as it applies to the councillors of councils, with such exceptions and modifications (if any) as the regulations may provide.

(2) In the application of this Act to county councils and members of county councils:

(a) a reference to the mayor of a council includes a reference to the chairperson of a county council, and

(b) a reference to mayoral office includes a reference to the office of the chairperson of a county council, and

(c) a reference to a councillor includes a reference to a member of a county council.

Appendix C – Asset Management Policy

Asset Management Policy

OVERVIEW
The Upper Hunter County Council's assets presently consist of the operational vehicles and plant used by staff on a day-to-day basis. Council has no buildings or other infrastructure fixed assets.

POLICY OBJECTIVES
This policy provides the overall framework to guide the sustainable management of Council's asset portfolio.

POLICY STATEMENT
To ensure effective asset management, Council will endeavour to:

- Utilise assets to their fullest potential to maximise usage and economic performance.
- Set the asset value threshold for capitalisation at $2,000
- Ensure that asset renewal, disposal, upgrade or new asset provision is carried out in accordance with the adopted resourcing strategy that includes demonstrated need, life cycle costing, alternative modes of delivery and sustainability.
- Ensure asset management practices conform to legislative requirements and reflect best practice in the industry.
- Ensure that all asset purchase, maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacement shall be guided by Council's Asset Management Plans and annual budgetary process.
- Assets meet specifications and quality standards; and
- Assets meet requirements for public safety, WHS and maintainability.

POLICY REFERENCE (E.G. LEGISLATION, RELATED DOCUMENTS)

Local Government Act 1993

Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Act 2009

UHCC Business Activity Strategic Plan 2025-35

Author
General Manager
Date
25 January 2025

Adopted by Council