



Operational Policy

COLAC OTWAY WEED MANAGEMENT POLICY

PURPOSE

<<Insert a brief description of why the policy exists and what it is expected to achieve.>>

Weeds, or invasive plants, pose a serious threat to natural, social and amenity assets across Australia and have a profoundly detrimental impact on biodiversity, public amenity and primary production. Weed management in Colac Otway Shire is therefore critical to the protection and enhancement of these assets, and Council has legislated responsibility to respond to threats posed by declared weeds on land it manages, in particular under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act), which sets state-wide strategic policy for invasive species.

Health, safety, biodiversity conservation and amenity can be seriously affected by weeds. Weeds can threaten wildlife and habitat, rare or threatened species, native vegetation communities and ecosystems. They are visible to the community and in some cases reduce amenity and contribute to reduction in the safe access or use of public spaces.

Weed management in Colac Otway is critical for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the protection and encouragement of indigenous flora and fauna and is critical in the maintenance of a range of public spaces including street landscapes, parks and sports fields.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the key principles that guide Colac Otway Shire Council's weed management programs to ensure Council is able to implement effective and accountable weed control and chemical/herbicide application that also minimises environmental and human impacts.

SCOPE

<<Describe the coverage of the policy, that is who or what it applies to and the extent of activities that it covers.>>

This policy applies to all weed treatment programs auspiced, undertaken or contributed to by Colac Otway Shire Council, and it is binding upon Councillors, Council Officers, contractors and consultants, while engaged by Council, and any volunteers involved with works associated with these programs.

This policy applies to:

- Amenity and asset maintenance, public open space management and road maintenance; and
- Environmental weed management for biodiversity protection and enhancement.

Uncontrolled when printed

CM reference		Date of adoption	
--------------	--	------------------	--



DEFINITIONS

<<Provide a list and brief description of key terms used in the policy.>>

NB. For consistency across all of Council's weed management documentation, this list contains phrases that pertain to both this policy and its related procedures.

Term	Definition
Agricultural Chemical User Permit	The agricultural chemical users permit (ACUP) is a permit that provides authority to a person to purchase specified 'restricted supply' chemicals and use specified 'restricted use' chemicals in Victoria. Individuals are required to undertake relevant training before they may hold an ACUP.
Best Practice	A method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark. In addition, a 'best' practice can evolve to become better as improvements are discovered.
Community facilities	High amenity use Council-managed facilities, such as COPACC and Bluewater.
Herbicide	Any chemical used for the control of weeds. Under Victorian legislation, there are controls on the use of agricultural chemicals, which include requirements for keeping records of chemical applications.
Open space and reserves	Publically accessible Council-managed open spaces and reserves. This includes parkland, such as Colac Botanic Gardens and Rex Norman Park, as well as environmental reserves.
Playgrounds	The soft fall areas of Council's 25 managed playgrounds and skate parks
Prescribed measures	A range of management measures and techniques are 'prescribed' under the Catchment and Land Protection (CaLP) Act 1994 Regulations 2002 for use in Victoria. All of Council's weed management operations follow these prescribed measures.
Product label	Herbicide chemicals are registered for specific uses. Each chemical has a 'product label' that documents the approved use, and the approved rate of use, within Victoria. The product label is important in determining the appropriateness of chemical use and must be followed at all times.
Roadside furniture	All fixtures in the road and road reserve, namely drainage culverts, guideposts, signs and guardrails.
Shoulder maintenance	Works conducted on the shoulder of roads prior to construction, re-sheeting or re-sealing.
Weed	An invasive plant growing in a context where it has adverse effects on environmental, economic or community-based values. This Policy recognises that what constitutes a 'weed' varies depending on the management context. In all cases, it is a plant growing 'in the wrong place', namely where it threatens or degrades the designated land use or where it may readily spread to degrade other land.

REFERENCES

This policy is governed by the following Legislation and Statutory Regulations:

- *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act)
- *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992*

Uncontrolled when printed

CM reference	Date of adoption



- Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Regulations 2007
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- Public Health and Wellbeing Regulation 2009
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS) – All chemicals used by Council are bound by the product specific SDS from a legislative perspective. The SDS highlights how a chemical is to be used and stored, and safety requirements for the public and those applying it.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

<<This section is to contain the policy statement and body of the policy. A policy is a statement of position or principles to be adopted. Please do not include the procedure necessary for carrying out this policy, a separate procedure should be prepared for this purpose.>>

1. STATEMENT

Council is committed to the effective management of declared weeds on land it manages and seeks to adopt best practice principles, policies and procedures to support its weed management objectives.

Colac Otway Shire Council’s objectives in weed management are to:

- significantly reduce the cover of declared noxious weeds and other environmental weeds that are a threat to the health and quality of Council-owned/managed land of significant environmental value and community amenity;
- treat target weed species using appropriate techniques and registered herbicides, at the optimum control time for each target species (i.e. before seed-set);
- undertake works in a fashion that ensures no damage to off-target native or other vegetation, and ensures no spray drift or other chemical contamination of any land, ground water or waterway, including organic farms or other sensitive areas;
- create a safe environment for all staff and the community in relation to chemical application within the municipality;
- ensure risks associated with the use of herbicides and pesticides are safely controlled and managed;
- capture information to help inform future management and continuous improvement of Council’s programs;
- continue to investigate new and alternative weed control options that seek to balance a range of important considerations, including environmental and human health impacts, and cost-effectiveness; and
- where possible, seek to reduce the use of chemically based herbicides and pesticides as weed control and landscape management measures.

Uncontrolled when printed

CM reference		Date of adoption	
--------------	--	------------------	--



2. KEY PRINCIPLES

2.1 PRESCRIBED MEASURES FOR WEED CONTROL

Appropriate methods for control and eradication of declared weeds in Victoria are prescribed under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 Regulations 2002. All of Council’s weed management operations follow these prescribed measures. The chosen measure applied is determined based on the target weed species and management context.

Herbicide application is among the measures applied by Council for the management of public open space, environmental reserves, revegetation sites and road reserves. All of Council’s operations that involve the use of selective herbicide application – which most frequently involves techniques of targeted spraying and cutting-and-painting – are in strict compliance with Victorian legislation controlling the use of registered herbicides and adhere to all requirements and dosage recommendations of product labels. All herbicides used are approved by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) for weed control and are applied in accordance with their product label and Safety Data Sheet (SDS) by appropriately trained and supervised staff and contractors.

In environmentally sensitive sites and certain high-amenity public open spaces, such as playgrounds, the range of weed control techniques may also involve mechanical, hand weeding and weed steaming. Ecological burns are also undertaken on some sites, including significant remnant grasslands.

Safe work and risk mitigation procedures, as well as record-keeping systems, are also integral to the effective undertaking of all of Council’s weed management operations.

2.2 STRATEGIC ASSET PROTECTION

Given the limited resources available to Council to perform its weed control responsibilities – and the number of assets over a wide area for which it is responsible – Council takes a strategic asset-protection based approach to weed control both in terms of target sites and in terms of noxious weed species. This approach is determined in consultation with Council’s Weeds Consultative Committee and according to the requirements of funding providers for programs that are auspiced by other levels of government.

2.3 ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Council Otway Shire Council’s Weed Management Policy establishes a clear framework of principles to guide its weed management operations and ensure these maintain high levels of accountability and transparency.

Public notification is an important component of ensuring that Council’s weed management operations remain accountable and transparent. Council is committed to notifying communities within Colac Otway Shire of upcoming spraying works by publishing this information in the form of a public notice on Council’s website, to be updated at minimum twice per year. Attention is drawn to newly published information via a media release and/or social media. Information included as part of the public notice is:

1. location of spraying;
2. the active chemical constituent(s) of the herbicide(s) being applied; and

Uncontrolled when printed

CM reference		Date of adoption	
--------------	--	------------------	--



3. an indicative timetable of spraying.

Additional public notification methods where herbicides are applied may include signage and the use of marker dyes, so that treated weeds can be easily identified in the period between application and die-off.

Council also maintains a Community Weed Treatment Exemption Register that allows landholders within the municipality to opt out of Council’s weed treatment programs adjacent to their properties by request.

2.4 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Colac Otway Shire Council is committed to continuous improvement of its natural resource, public open space and community amenity management, including seeking to increase efficacy, efficiency and safety of its weed treatment operations.

Council captures detailed information and undertakes monitoring of its programs to help inform future management and continuous improvement objectives. It also undertakes ongoing investigation and trialling of new and alternative weed control options and methods that seek to balance a range of important considerations, including environmental and human health impacts, and cost-effectiveness. As part of these investigations Council acknowledges that, while herbicide application is on some occasions the most appropriate management technique, long-term reliance on chemical herbicide/pesticide can present other potential concerns including the development of weed-specific herbicide resistance and potential health impacts on people, wildlife and the environment.

Council’s commitment to continuous improvement of its weed management programs also includes ongoing consideration of the principles of ‘Value for money’ and ‘Fair and Honest Dealing’, as outlined in Council’s Procurement Policy.

2.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Party / Parties	Roles and Responsibilities
Chief Executive	Ensure overall corporate compliance with the policy.
General Managers	Ensure compliance with the policy by all Council Officers under their supervision.
Manager, Environment & Community Safety and Manager, Services & Operations	Overall responsibility for the policy implementation, compliance and review.
Other Managers	Ensure compliance with the policy by all Council Officers under their supervision.
Relevant Team Leaders/Unit Coordinators (Services & Operations and Environment)	Responsible for reviewing, updating and implementing policy. Primary sources for weed treatment advice, training and guidance.

Uncontrolled when printed

CM reference		Date of adoption	
--------------	--	------------------	--



RELATED DOCUMENTS

<<List documents that relate to the policy and where they are located, eg website, intranet, CM reference.>>

- **Colac Otway Shire Environment Strategy**
 - Document location: *D13/44380*
- **Environmental Sustainability Policy 2012**
 - Document location: *D15/89691*
- **Procurement Policy 2019**
 - Document location: *D19/171470*
- **Public Notification of Weed Treatment Procedure**
 - Document location: *D20/96867*
- **Weed Treatment Exemption Procedure**
 - Document location: *D20/96845*
- **Weed Treatment Exemption Register**

Document title: Properties to notify before treatment commences and or where no treatment may occur - Previously called No Spray register

 - Document location: *D18/83848*

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy owner	<<State position title, not person's name>>	Division	
Adopted by executive		Policy Number	
File Number		Review date	Xx/xx/xxxx

Uncontrolled when printed

CM reference		Date of adoption	
--------------	--	------------------	--