



**general
purpose
committee**

2
section

infrastructure

GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE - INFRASTRUCTURE

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ITEM: 53**McMahon Park Report****FILE NUMBER:**

PK/007/ENG/ING25NBX.E06

REPORT:

Several reports have been written in the past six months regarding the future of McMahon Park, Kurrajong. As reported the park is in need of significant maintenance and upgrading works simply to enable the continuation of current sporting activities. It would appear then to be an opportune time to consider and make allowances for anticipated future needs whilst this work is being undertaken. McMahon Park is managed on a day to day basis by a park management committee which has been active for many years. The committee has been consulted extensively about the future direction of the park and have initiated discussions with user groups about their future needs.

The work that is required simply to upgrade the facilities to enable current use to continue includes resurfacing of the oval and adjustment of irrigation system, earthworks to enable the construction of cricket practice wickets and discuss nets, increase capacity of floodlighting, realignment of fenceline within the current park boundary and formalisation of internal roads and carparks. It is estimated that these works will be in the order of \$100,000. These works alone will not however increase the capacity of McMahon Park, simply the quality of the existing facilities.

The committee has recently submitted a plan and correspondence outlining their suggested course of action for the park, which is that a portion of land be purchased from the adjoining private property owner. The reasons for this option being preferred are:

- Significantly less earth works involved for a far superior result;
- Enables the comfortable 'fit' of cricket practice nets, discuss nets and a triple jump pit which are current needs of the park users;
- This option involves significantly less tree removal than other options;
- The preferred option will enable a more correct alignment of the athletics track which is ideally supposed to have straights along a north-south axis;

The proposal would enable the following major changes to be made to the existing facilities at McMahon Park:

- A full 400 metre, eight lane athletics track vs the current 300 metre, seven lane track.
- 2 full size and 1 modified soccer field vs 1 mini, 1 modified and 1 not quite full size field.

This would be the only 400m track available in the entire district. The committee state "that these proposed boundary adjustments/extensions along with some other ground improvements will lead to a sporting facility that will be able to meet the communities sporting needs in the long term."

The adjoining land is currently the subject of a development application which is being determined. There is scope within the development for boundary adjustments pending approval of the land owner. There is capacity for a parcel of land approximately 6,500 square metres to be added to the park if boundary adjustments could be made to the development. No official contact has yet been

made with the property owner however it is understood that members of the park committee have discussed the proposal with the property owner. It is recommended that contact be made to assess whether the property owner is conducive to the proposal of boundary readjustment for the purposes of an extension to McMahon Park.

If Council supports the project in principle, negotiations can occur with the land owners and costs of property acquisition and construction with funding options further reported. It should be noted that the Sports Council are not in favour of this proposal as they have other funding priorities. In terms of available recreation space Council is advised that it has more open space than recommended by the National Standards.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council support, in principle, the proposal to extend McMahon Park and that the matter be further reported.

ATTACHMENTS:

There are no supporting documents for this report.

oooO END OF ITEM 53 Oooo

ITEM: 54 **Acquisition of land; proposed link construction Colonial Drive to Berger Road**

FILE NUMBER: GT230/011 Pt4 & GC281/076/ENG/ING25NBX.E01

REPORT:

Detail of a proposal to construct a connector route linking Colonial Drive, Bligh Park to the South Windsor industrial precinct as part of Council's strategy for future traffic management and development in the North Bligh Park/South Windsor Precinct was reported to Council on 9 May 2000.

It has been identified previously that the proposed link connecting Colonial Drive from its existing termination point to Berger Road at its closest point approximately 350 metres to the north east would be a requisite for any future development of the North Bligh Park area.

Five (5) properties would be immediately affected by the proposed road link and the respective owners were notified of this by letter on 15 May 2000.

As a start to formal negotiations each owner was offered compensation on a without prejudice basis for the requisition of the area of their land required for future roadworks. Offers were made to the landowners in accordance with the recommendation of a consultant valuer.

As at 14 July four (4) of the five (5) affected landholders had formally responded to the offer. The one landholder most significantly affected by the proposal did not respond and it is doubtful that any negotiated agreement will be reached with this occupant. All of the four landholders who did respond rejected the offers of compensation generally on the basis that:

- 1 The nominated amounts offered were too low.
- 2 The proposed road would only devalue their land if rezoning did not eventuate.
- 3 There was no guarantee that the land would ever be rezoned.

It was generally indicated in the correspondence received that there would be no objection to the proposed road in principle provided that the overall development of the area did proceed.

It would appear that there are two options available:

- 1 Defer further action until rezoning occurs. This option would not impact on the timing or likelihood of any further rezoning, however, it would impact on Council's overall strategy for traffic management in the North Bligh Park/South Windsor precinct.
- 2 Undertake acquisition by compulsory process for public purposes. It should be noted that a primary aim of the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act is to encourage the acquisition of land by agreement rather than by compulsory process.

RECOMMENDATION:

Further action in relation to the purchase of properties to enable the road link between Colonial Drive and Berger Road be deferred until such time as the rezoning of land in the North Bligh Park area proceeds.

ATTACHMENTS:

There are no supporting documents for this report.

Oooo END OF ITEM 54 Oooo

ITEM: 55 Powell Park Bush Regeneration Project**FILE NUMBER:** PK/052/ENG/ING25NBX.E04**REPORT:**

Powell Park is a Crown Reserve which is under the care and control of Council, and is located in Kurrajong Heights. For many years the entire area of Powell Park has been mowed, including the lower, steeper section that has a mature tree canopy. In accordance with the reserve's draft Plan of Management, this steeply sloped and tree covered section of Powell Park was removed from the mowing program and allowed to naturally regenerate, from July 1997. Other reserves in which this has been trialed include Bellbird Hill Lookout (Kurrajong Heights), Riverside Drive Reserves (Yarramundi), and Ebenezer Park (Ebenezer).

The strategy to reduce mowed areas in appropriate locations has two main purposes:

- 1 To increase areas of natural bushland where possible; This can only be successful in locations that are identified as having high potential for natural regeneration with limited weed penetration.
- 2 To reduce costs associated with maintenance of open space; This is made possible in areas where natural regeneration is successful due to the reduction in resources required to maintain the area. Initially, there may be no reduction in maintenance costs for one to two years while weed control is required. There is then however significantly reduced long term maintenance costs associated with maintaining bushland areas compared to mowed areas.

In relation to Powell Park, the area in which mowing was reduced has a steep slope which is prone to erosion and has very minimal groundcover. It is of limited use for ball games and the like, due to the steepness of the slope, and is much more suited to walking, picnics and bird watching. It was identified as a location with high potential for natural regeneration.

The ensuing regeneration in Powell Park has been remarkably successful, with a large number of native species regenerating over the site. All types of native plants are re-establishing, including trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. Very limited weed growth has occurred as a result of this change in management. Bushland management experts, including the head teacher of Bush Regeneration at Richmond TAFE, have identified the area as one of the best natural regeneration sites in the region.

Community Survey

At Council's Ordinary meeting on 8 February 2000, the issue of this bush regeneration project was raised as a result of local community concerns. An information flyer including a park user survey, was then distributed to all Kurrajong Heights residents to gauge use patterns and interest in the reserve.

Twelve completed surveys were returned and a public meeting was held on Monday 3 April 2000. At this meeting, attended by approximately 20 people, the reasons behind the change in management were outlined, and the results of the regeneration process explained. Members of the community then expressed their opinions on the future of the reserve, both for and against the regeneration project.

In response to the concerns raised at the meeting, attempts have been made to compromise by slightly increasing the mowed area. Best practice in the conservation of bushland reserves is to allow a buffer between mowed areas and native bushland areas to reduce weed invasion. In the attempt to compromise, the buffer area has been reduced somewhat with clumps of trees left in mulched beds. This has further opened up the mowed area of the park whilst still retaining the most valuable section of regeneration. It is apparent that a couple of local residents are still not satisfied with the result and wish for the entire park to be mowed again.

Vegetation Assessment

To ensure that appropriate decisions are made for the future management of the site, a Flora Survey and Conservation Assessment was commissioned. Flora consultant Teresa James was engaged to undertake the report. Ms James specialises in vegetation survey, plant identification and conservation assessments. After working as a Botanist for the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney for 20 years and publishing an extensive list of botanical reports and books, she is considered one of the premier vegetation experts in Western Sydney.

The Flora Survey and Conservation Assessment covered a wide range of issues including site description, plant species identification, vegetation community identification, condition of bushland, conservation significance, legislative obligations, and recommendations for future management.

An outline of the main sections of the report are as follows:

3.1 Plant species

"The tree canopy is relatively mature with trees 12-25+m high forming an open-woodland to open-forest. Dominant tree species are White Stringybark (Eucalyptus globoidea), Turpentine (Syncarpia glomulifera) and Sydney Peppermint (Eucalyptus piperita) with occasional trees of Grey Gum (Eucalyptus punctata), Grey Ironbark (E. paniculata) and Smooth-barked Apple (Angophora costata)."

*"A total of **107 native plant species** were recorded in a "snapshot" survey during winter from an area of c. 1.5 ha of bushland at the site....It is likely that the number of species would significantly increase if further surveys were conducted at other times of the year, particularly during spring and summer... Nevertheless species richness is particularly high considering the long history of mowing at the site and the relatively small area of bushland."*

3.2 Community identification

"To summarise, native vegetation at the site is representative of Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest intergrading with Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest downslope."

3.4 Condition of the vegetation

"Bushland at the site below the mown areas is in good condition... Species richness is particularly high considering the history and size of the site... After only two years without mowing, diverse and well-developed shrub and ground layers have regenerated below the mature canopy. Excellent regeneration of tree species, particularly of the White Stringybark, is also evident."

*"Native species dominate the site with relatively few exotic species (weeds) common in the bushland area. Sixteen... common exotic species were recorded during the survey compared with over 100 native species. The most serious weedy species present is African Lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*) which is an invasive grass, however, it is presently restricted to more open and disturbed areas, particularly along the tracks and at the boundary of the bushland and mown area."*

4. Summary of conservation significance & legislative obligations

*"Native vegetation at the site is of high conservation significance. The site is representative of an ecotonal area between intergrading Turpentine-Ironbark Forest and Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest, **both recognised as endangered ecological communities under the TSC Act (1995)**. These communities provide habitat for many plant species associated with shale soils which are generally poorly protected within conservation reserves."*

*"A high diversity of plant species occurs at the site within a relatively small area despite a long history of mowing. ... The vegetation is in Class 1 condition with minimal weed invasion and has the potential to regenerate to a near natural state. One plant species *Lissanthe sapida* is of **national and state significance**, there are four other species of particular **regional significance** and some twenty species considered inadequately conserved in Western Sydney and the lower Blue Mountains."*

*"In view of the **high conservation values** and natural resilience of vegetation at the site, protection and recovery of the bushland is strongly warranted and required by legislation. Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest are now **protected under the TSCA (1995)** and any activity, such as mowing of the understorey, which impacts on the natural values of threatened communities or species requires an eight part test to be undertaken (for both flora and fauna) to determine whether such impacts are significant."*

*"Mowing within the bushland area **directly threatens the survival** of the endangered communities at the site, in the local area and at their western geographical limit."*

"The protection of these endangered communities is also relevant under the State Environmental Planning Policy No 19 (bushland in urban areas) and regional and local environmental plans, as well as being in line with the implementation of the State Biodiversity Strategy."

Management recommendations

"Consolidation and protection of bushland area to provide a continuous vegetated zone within the middle to lower sections of the reserve with as large a "core" area as possible to minimise adverse edge effects. At present some fairly open areas extend into bushland zone. Consolidation can be achieved through bush regeneration, complimentary plantings and the closure of some tracks. The creation of a buffer zone between the bushland and mown areas is recommended to minimise the invasion of exotic species and physical impacts from mowing. Consideration should also be given to fencing off bushland areas for protection.

Weed invasion is currently not a real problem at the site, however, the control of potentially serious weed species will be essential to long-term viability of the vegetation. In particular, the persistent and invasive African Lovegrass (Eragrostis curvula) should be targeted. Garden escapes along the boundaries e.g. along the southern edge should also be controlled to prevent invasion and establishment within the reserve.....The closing of smaller tracks would help to minimise disturbance and weed invasion.

Habitat protection and monitoring of rarer plant species to observe population trends and to identify any specific management requirements. It may be advisable to fence some areas or limit access depending on the level of recreational use of sensitive areas.

Maintenance of genetic integrity. If protection of the endemic, endangered communities at the site is a primary management objective, all plantings in the reserve should be native to the site and of local provenance to protect the genetic integrity of the vegetation. An ongoing propagation program within the reserve should form the basis for any plantings.

A community education program in the local area may help to encourage appreciation of the bushland and its conservation values.

Development of a management plan for the bushland area should be a priority."

Conclusion

The vegetation that has regenerated in Powell Park over the past three years is quite unique and extremely valuable. The vegetation is protected by both the Threatened Species Conservation Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act due to the significance of the species that are present and the relative rarity of the ecological community represented.

It appears that the recreational use of Powell Park has not decreased and the regeneration has had little visual impact. It is suggested that the value of regenerating the steeper areas of the park would outweigh any reduction of area available for recreation purposes within the park.

RECOMMENDATION:

That an area of approximately 1.2 hectares be mown to allow full recreational use and regeneration of bushland be encouraged within the tree covered area and a point approximately 30 metres west of that area.

ATTACHMENTS:

There are no supporting documents for this report.

Oooo END OF ITEM 55 Oooo

ITEM: 56 Road Sealing Program**FILE NUMBER:** GR120/002 Pt3/ENG/ING25NBX.E03

REPORT:

Council in the adoption of the Management Plan and Financial Estimates 2000/2001 resolved in part that \$236,000 be allocated to sealing of an unsealed road in 2000/2001 as the first year of an ongoing program of sealing of approximately one kilometre of unsealed road per year.

As has been reported previously the philosophy which had been supported by Council since 1993 in relation to the management of its sealed road network was:

That there be no further expansion of the sealed road network unless by developer contribution or exceptional circumstances warranting such extension. Priority would be given to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the existing sealed road network in accordance with sound asset management principles.

In terms of this philosophy, as outlined at the informal information session to Council on 6 June 2000, over the five year period from 1995-2000, 9.1 kilometres of local roads have been upgraded from a gravel to a sealed surface either by developer works or included in Council's Capital Works Program (1.82 kilometres per year). This figure does not take into account sealing works adjacent to new kerb and guttering. Within the same time period, 18.7 kilometres of additional sealed roads have been provided as part of subdivisional works.

It has been a relatively simple matter to explain to people residing or travelling on gravel roads the asset management principles relating to the overall road network and as such reduce to some extent the constant pressure which had been previously been applied to have gravel roads sealed.

As Council has now resolved to carry out an ongoing upgrading program to seal gravel roads on an annual basis, it is considered that some form of prioritisation in terms of tangible benefits should be developed as a means of assessing the order in which gravel roads should be included in ongoing works programs. A number of factors have been investigated.

Traffic volume

Obviously the gravel roads with the highest traffic volumes will provide a higher benefit to those people utilising a particular road and would most likely attract the highest maintenance costs. Those higher volume roads would also have the greatest impact on adjacent development in terms of amenity.

Residential amenity

To take into account the complaints/requests for sealing due to adverse impact on the residential amenity of people living adjacent to a gravel road due to dust emanating from the road, it is considered that the number of dwellings adjacent to an unsealed road should be assessed. This

could be expressed as the number of dwellings per kilometre in the prioritisation equation. Consideration could also be given to the distance of dwellings from the road, however, this has not been done in this case.

Accident history

The accident history on a particular road is a relevant consideration although the number of accidents may not be directly related to the road surface (gravel or bitumen) and may be related to a particular problem at a location on the road or driver behaviour or a combination of both. It is, however, a useful tool in deriving a benefit cost ratio on which to prioritise improvement works.

The accident history utilised in this exercise is a five year period to December 1999 and is obtained from police records of reported accidents. The type of accident and severity is assigned a cost and is used in determining the benefit/cost ratio of the project.

Benefit cost ratio

The benefit in this ratio is the saving achieved over a period of time attributed to the cost of accidents. The cost portion of the ratio is the construction cost and the maintenance/rehabilitation costs over a twenty year life cycle for the project. Thus any project having a benefit/cost ratio of greater than 1 is a worthwhile project in terms of capital outlay.

Where there are no accidents statistics recorded the benefit/cost ratio in terms of accident savings is obviously zero.

As there has been some discussion regarding the accuracy of construction estimates recently, a unit rate of \$40 per square metre has been adopted for all projects to ensure uniform assessment when determining the benefit/cost ratios.

An additional argument is often quite validly brought forward regarding the vehicle operating costs on a gravel surface compared to a sealed surface and also the value of travel time when compared to travelling on the different surfaces. An additional benefit/cost ratio has been determined taking both these arguments into account and adding them to the previously determined benefit in benefit/cost ratio and determining a new ratio on that basis. In rural areas the value of travel time has been determined on the basis of travel speed increasing from 60 kph to 80 kph whilst in urban areas it remained constant. In relation to vehicle operating costs, the difference in cost between travelling on a gravel surface at 70 kph was compared to travelling on a sealed surface at 80 kph.

Specific requests

There have been two recent specific requests for upgrading and sealing gravel roads due to perceived needs in relation to the Olympic Games. One request is from Mr Don Burke in relation to the provision of a training venue for the Equestrian Team and one from Mr Ken Pullen of Mahons Creek Road, Yarramundi in relation to housing of bus drivers who will be providing bus services to the Olympic venue.

Whilst both these requests would provide a benefit to the residents in the immediate areas under

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consideration, it is felt that these roads should not necessarily be given a higher priority than other roads having similar needs based on a one-off short term event. If there is such a need identified it should perhaps be funded as part of the Olympic budget.

Road	Length metres	AADT	Dwellings No No/Km		Reported Accidents in five year period	BCR 1	BCR 2
Avondale Road	772	-	Nil		-	0	Neg
Branders Road	620	65	4	6.5	-	0	Neg
Brennans Dam Road	100	549	Nil		1}		
Commercial Road	239	285	Nil		1}	1.3	1.62
Old Stock Route Road	274	493	2	7	-}		
Crooked Lane	641	110	11	17	2	1.86	1.86
Fairey Road Sth to Penruddock	305	184	13	42.5	3	5.2	5.18
Geakes Road	1209	103	7	6	1	0.55	0.65
Godalla Road	841	192	4	5	1	0.79	0.93
Mahons Creek Road	380	-	4	10.5	-	0	Neg
Moles Road	380	103	6	16	-	0	Neg
Old East Kurrajong Road	3396	180	20	6	6	1.16	1.79
Packer Road	3549	178	20	6	2	0.45	0.67
Roberts Creek Road	1403	87	1	0.7	-	0	Neg
Settlers Road	9960	248	14	1.4	10	0.63	0.96
Shepherds Road	661	-	8	12.0	-	0	Neg
St Albans Road	8953	199	8/12	2.2	5	0.36	0.65
Tizzana Road	1550	147	7	4.5	3	1.3	1.52

Neg. indicates that the benefit/cost ratio due to time/travel costs is negligible.

It can be seen from the table that based on the criteria outline that priority for sealing should in the first instance be given to Fairey Road and Crooked Lane. Further volumetric data should be collected throughout the year to enable further assessment of priorities prior to the 2001/2002 budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

That:

- 1 The current funding of \$236,000 (two hundred and thirty six thousand dollars) be allocated towards sealing Fairey Road and Crooked Lane in the current budget.
- 2 Full traffic data be obtained throughout the year to enable further assessment of priorities in relation to sealing of unsealed roads in the 2001/2002 Capital Works Program.

ATTACHMENTS:

There are no supporting documents for this report.

Oooo END OF ITEM 56 Oooo

ITEM: 57 Adopt a Road Program**FILE NUMBER:** GW010/013 PT03/ENG/ING25NBX.E02

REPORT:

Councillor Calvert has requested a further report to Council on the Adopt a Road Program. The initial report which was ratified at the Ordinary meeting on 10 August 1999, is reproduced below for information.

“A report was requested regarding the possible implementation of an Adopt a Road Program within the Hawkesbury. Two Councils which were identified as operating the scheme, Cessnock and Canberra, were contacted in relation to the project.

Cessnock Council

The project is co-ordinated by the Council’s Tidy Towns Officer and to date 27 kilometres of roadside have been adopted or sponsored. Sponsors vary from community groups (Lions and Apex Clubs), to major local businesses (ICI, Capral, and collieries). A total of 13 sponsors are currently involved in the program.

Work undertaken generally involves roadside litter collection, with community groups usually carrying out the work themselves, whilst business sponsors usually engage contractors to do the work on their behalf. Sponsors are signed up for a period of two years and must carry out at least six “clean-ups” per year. Supervisors undertaking clean up works must attend an Occupational Health and Safety Awareness Course run by Council.

The program aims to not only reduce roadside litter, but also to educate the community and encourage ownership of the problem. Signs are erected on the roadside indicating the sponsors name, with businesses being charged \$250 (two hundred and fifty dollars) per sign and Council meeting the sign cost for community groups.

Canberra Council

A similar program to Cessnock Council’s is co-ordinated in Canberra by the Keep Australia Beautiful National Association. The program is sponsored by 17 organisations with a mixture of community groups and local businesses.

As with Cessnock, sponsors must carry out a minimum of six “clean-ups” per year, although agreements are only signed for a one year period.

Both the Canberra and Cessnock programs rely heavily on a large amount of advertising and promotion to generate community and business interest in the project.

There has been an ongoing problem with the area of land on Windsor Road fronting Windsor High School, with the area becoming quite untidy when not mown by the school. Councillor Paine has had discussions with the school, Windsor Rotary and a number of businesses in the McGraths Hill area and it has been indicated that Rotary and some businesses may be interested in an Adopt a Road type project for this area.

A local resident, Mr Mark Jones, has recently submitted a proposal to “Clean Up” Wilberforce Road. Mr Jones has contacted the Roads & Traffic Authority who have indicated support for the “Hawkesbury Clean Up and Enhancement Campaign” commencing with Wilberforce Road. Mr Jones has been organising volunteers throughout June and July to undertake cleaning and clearing of the roadside every Wednesday. The Roads & Traffic Authority have provided the pick-up service for the material and tipping fees have been paid from the Parks Maintenance budget. The trial has been operating well and it is anticipated that co-operation between the volunteer group, landowners and the Roads & Traffic Authority could achieve a considerable improvement to the roadside areas.

Recommendation:

That the Windsor Road, McGraths Hill and Wilberforce Road areas be pursued on a trial basis to gauge the interest of the community in setting up an Adopt a Road program.”

Update of Program

The Adopt-a-Road Program that is currently operating on Wilberforce Road is working well, has encountered no problems and has encouraged the Roads & Traffic Authority to provide more maintenance of the roadside verges.

The program in this area was generated by members of the community and because of this is well supported. Initially work was carried out each Wednesday which included slashing of the roadside, weed removal and collection of rubbish. Maintenance is now occurring less frequently as the major part of the work has occurred and is generally now only a tidy-up. The group contacted adjoining landowners requesting their assistance in maintaining their naturestrip and the ongoing maintenance is occurring through the group, the landowners and the RTA.

The Wilberforce Road clean-up was initiated and driven by the local community. RTA contributed to slashing of the areas once cleared of weeds and rubbish, and also picked up piles of rubbish from the roadside. Council’s main contribution was to pay any tip fees incurred by the rubbish removal. Additionally, a letter of support was given to the group as well as signage to promote the group's activities and advise that people were working in the area.

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RECOMMENDATION:

That expressions of interest be called for groups wishing to be included in the Adopt a Road Program.

ATTACHMENTS:

There are no supporting documents for this report.

Oooo END OF ITEM 57 Oooo

ITEM: 58 **NSW Lantana Biological Control Taskforce****FILE NUMBER:** GE020/013/ENG/ING25NBX.E05

REPORT:

Lantana (*Lantana camera*) is one of the most serious weed problems in Australia. Although not declared noxious in Hawkesbury LGA, it has been identified as a 'Weed of National Significance' by the Federal Government. Lantana has a sever impact on the environmental, economic, agricultural, and recreational conditions and opportunities in our community.

History

Lantana was first recorded in Australia in 1841, and by 1897 it was already being described as 'a most troublesome weed which has spread to an alarming extent'. Lantana is widely distributed throughout coastal and sub-coastal areas from southern NSW to northern Queensland.

To date, control methods have centred on manual removal or herbicide application. Although effective in their own ways, both methods require substantial resource allocation and are limited in their long term success.

NSW Lantana Biological Control Taskforce

In April 1997 the NSW Lantana Biological Control Taskforce was established to focus resources on finding a biological control for Lantana. This Taskforce, operating in conjunction with an existing program in Queensland, has focused resources on research and development of biological controls for different varieties of Lantana. Since biological control began, 28 insects have been introduced to Australia to control Lantana, with 17 becoming established. Some of these are widespread, but only four are currently effective and causing significant damage to the plant.

The variation in climate where Lantana is found has affected the ability of insects to establish and control the plant. To assist in the research for suitable biological controls for various regions of the State, the Taskforce has undertaken some initial field trials with proven insects. In October 1999, in conjunction with local landcare group - the Hawkesbury Rainforest Network, the Taskforce released some insects in the Bowen Mountain and Kurrajong Heights areas. The results from these field trials are still to be collected.

Impact on the Hawkesbury

Lantana is a major weed in the Hawkesbury Region. Occurring in most areas of the LGA, it is particularly bad along the western escarpment in Grose Vale, Bowen Mountain, Kurrajong, Kurmond, Kurrajong Hills, and up to Bilpin. Lantana is wide-spread on rural properties, rural roads, public reserves, and National Parks.

Lantana creates hazardous conditions along rural roads, causing sight distance problems, damage to vehicles, and in some cases reducing the road width to a single lane. The Parks & Recreation Branch undertakes regular weed control along many rural roads as well as on many of its public reserves. The current methods of control include spraying with herbicide and slashing with a slope mower. Due to the extensive nature of rural roads in the LGA, the control of Lantana is a difficult job, is costly and has limited success. Significant damage is done to existing native vegetation and the Lantana and other weeds return with renewed vigour within a few months.

Conclusion

Lantana is seen as one of the most invasive weeds in the Hawkesbury. It is dominating and destroying native vegetation and habitat, overrunning rural properties, having a significant economic impact on rural industry, and causing danger on our rural roads.

Council has been approached by the NSW Lantana Biological Control Taskforce to assist in the fight against this weed by committing funds to the project over the next three years. It is requested that Council commit \$2000 per year for the next three years. The successful development of a biological control for Lantana will give Council, and the community, another alternative to current control methods. This will help to win the fight against this invasive weed.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council approve the commitment of \$2,000 (two thousand dollars) for the current year to the NSW Lantana Biological Control Taskforce to assist in the control of Lantana and consideration be given to providing similar on-going funding for the next two years.

ATTACHMENTS:

There are no supporting documents for this report.

oooO END OF ITEM 58 Oooo