A guide to the management of pesticides in local government pest control programs in Western Australia

Delivering a Healthy WA

Produced by the Pesticides Advisory Committee
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Acknowledgements

The significant contribution of the following people in the development of this Guide is gratefully acknowledged.

Dr Margaret Stevens (Chair) and Members of the Pesticides Advisory Committee
Geoff Harcombe – Senior Scientific Officer, Department of Health WA
Mark Batty and Sarah Molloy of the WA Local Government Association
Helen McKay – Solicitor, Department of Health WA

Note
- The use of the term ‘pesticides’ is generic and includes herbicides, insecticides, fungicides etc.
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- Compliance with the Guide is voluntary and maybe adopted in its entirety or in part, over whatever timeframe is appropriate to the LGA.
- None of the requirements are mandated by legislation in Western Australia, however the Pesticides Advisory Committee recommends their adoption by LGAs as part of their policy framework for the control of pest species within their area.

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Disclaimer
This document is intended as a guide to assist a local government authority to develop policy in relation to pesticide use. It is not intended to be comprehensive and the Pesticides Advisory Committee and its members disclaim all liability for loss or damage that may arise as a result of the local government authority relying on the information in this guide.

The local government authority should ensure that any policy developed and the use of any pesticide accords with applicable legislation.
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Introduction

Local Government Authorities in metropolitan and regional Western Australia are responsible for the control of pests and weeds in buildings, structures and amenity areas under their control, such as road reserves, drainage easements, rights of way, public parks and gardens and other public open spaces.

For most Local Government Authorities, weed control is by far the largest part of their pest control program, and the use of herbicides is the most common control method used. However, weeds can be controlled, in some situations, by the use of non-chemical means such as slashing, burning and the use of steam. In addition, some Local Government Authorities may undertake substantial nuisance or disease vector insect control programs that include the use of insecticides.

To implement their pest control programs, Local Government Authorities use:

- Their own employees, and/or;
- Contract Licensed Pest Management Technicians.

Many Local Government Authorities prefer to use Licensed Pest Management Technicians, particularly when:

- Internal human resources are scarce, or do not have the requisite skills or experience;
- Technical equipment is not available; and/or
- Some pest control situations require specific technical expertise in the application of pesticides.

Local Government Authorities need to consider many issues before, during and after pest control operations. The aim of this Guide is to assist in the development of a pesticide use policy, based on a number of principles, incorporating community views, underpinned by risk and contract management, and auditing the outcome of the programs.

Some Local Government Authorities with specific pest problems may provide advice to residents about options for the control of these pests. Some of the principles included in this Guide could be applied to the development of such advice to the public.

Adoption of the Guide should result in:

- Better management of the use of pesticides by Local Government Authorities;
- More effective use of contract Licensed Pest Management Technicians in Local Government Authorities pest control programs;
- An increased level of community awareness in, and involvement with, the program; and
- The adoption of a more consistent and considered approach to the management of pest control programs.
1.0 Pesticide use policy of the Local Government Authority

**Aim:** To assist the Local Government Authority to define its pesticide use policy by identifying the principles which underpin the policy.

The Local Government Authority will need to decide whether or not it will include the use of pesticides in its pest and weed control programs. It should consider Integrated Pest Management strategies that include the use of non-chemical methods of pest and weed control, as well as the use of pesticides, to achieve the same result.

If the Local Government Authority chooses not to use pesticides, then section 1.2 applies.

1.1 *When using pesticides as part of a pest control program, the Local Government Authority will adhere to the following principles:*

- Minimise pesticide use, consistent with achieving acceptable pest control outcomes;
- Use pesticides on the basis of risk management, good contract management and auditing of results;
- Consult the community and provide timely notification of pesticide application events;
- Consult other government agencies and local stakeholders when pest control activities have the potential to impact on environmentally significant land, water catchment areas, farming property or other sensitive area or activity;
- Comply with all applicable legislation, codes and policies with respect to pesticide application by the Local Government Authority or its contractors.

1.2 *The Local Government Authority will not continue to use pesticides as the basis for, or part of, a pest control program and it may need to set a timetable for identifying suitable alternative approaches and achieving pesticide-free status.*

The remainder of this Guide is written on the assumption that the Local Government Authority decides to continue to use pesticides as the basis of its pest control program.
2.0 Risk assessment and management

**Aim:** To guide the implementation of a risk assessment and management process for pesticide use by the Local Government Authority.

For the purposes of this Guide, risk assessment and management is the process where the risks to human, environmental and agricultural health are identified, assessed, and, if possible, eliminated or controlled. This process should be carried out for each specific and collectively similar location. However, there are a number of ‘background’ issues that will influence the risk assessment:

### 2.1 Background issues:

- The size of the program and the financial, physical and human resources available to support it;
- The extent to which Integrated Pest Management methods are used;
- The effectiveness of training received by Local Government Authority employees, including training in the risk assessment process;
- The level of skill and experience in weed and pest control held by Local Government Authority employees;
- The extent (and need) to which advice on pest control is sought from external sources (e.g. government agencies, consultants etc);
- The adequacy of information held by the Local Government Authority on pesticides to be used in the program;
- The experience of the Local Government Authority officer responsible for preparing and monitoring pest control contracts.

### 2.2 The identification and assessment of the risks associated with the use of pesticides in the Local Government Authority should be undertaken for:

- Each specific location to be treated with pesticides (e.g. each golf course or public park); and/or
- Collectively similar locations to be treated with pesticides (e.g. urban kerbsides in the Local Government Authority).

#### 2.2.1 For each specific and/or collectively similar location, the following factors should be considered in the risk identification and assessment process:

- The pests to be controlled,
- The details of any non-pesticide control methods to be used,
- If a pesticide is to be used, consider:
  - The active constituents and trade names;
  - The rate of application of the pesticide;
  - The quantities of pesticide required, and frequency of use;
  - The application method to be used;
Its human and environmental toxicity;
All restrictions and prohibitions in relation to the use of the pesticide;
Any residual effects of the pesticide in the environment;
Storage facilities and transport arrangements for pesticides within the Local Government Authority;
The location of the pesticide application within the Local Government Authority;
Level of operator experience required for application;
The time of year/season/time of day;
Suitable weather conditions (e.g. when next rainfall due);
The type of surface (e.g. sandy soil, clay, hardstand, bitumen etc);
The type of vegetation covering the area;
Details of the pest control programs of adjoining Local Government Authorities (if appropriate).

- Human exposure risks:
  - The extent, nature and frequency of use of the area by the public and specific users;
  - The observance of human re-entry periods;
  - The location of "chemically sensitive" person(s).

- Environmental risks:
  - The proximity of sensitive areas/locations (e.g. public drinking water source areas, organic farms);
  - Marine, riparian and terrestrial;
  - Commercial/agricultural;
  - Recreational;
  - Other (e.g. medical, roads etc);
  - The need for no-spray (buffer) and exclusion zones.

- Other factors peculiar to the Local Government Authority.

2.3 Elimination/reduction of the risk:

Where the risk assessment for any particular specific or collectively similar location determines that the risk of using pesticides cannot be controlled, then the risk must be eliminated or at least reduced, using techniques such as avoidance, mitigation or prevention.

Examples of risk elimination/reduction options include (but will not be limited to):
- Using a non-chemical method of control;
- Changing to a pesticide with more acceptable properties;
- Applying pesticide at a lower rate of application;
- Applying pesticide at a different time of day;
- Using different application equipment;
- Imposing a buffer/no-spray zone;
- Only applying pesticide when the wind conditions and direction will eliminate spray drift to non-target areas;
- Removing people/animals/objects from the sensitive area;
- Setting up appropriate signage and advertising.
3.0 Community consultation and notification

Aim: To describe the three elements of community consultation:
- Community consultation of pesticide use policy;
- Periodic consultation of pest control plans; and
- Pesticide application notices.

It is important that the community has an opportunity to comment on the Local Government Authorities pesticide use policy as well as periodic plans for pest control.

Consulting the community about pest control plans, and notifying it of impending pesticide applications, is now recognised as best practice in pesticide management by public authorities.

Notification of pesticide applications are based on the principle that people who live or work in, or visit, an area have a basic right to know when public places are treated with pesticides. Notifying people about pesticide applications means that they can make informed decisions about entering a public place.

The differences between the three levels of communication are shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATE WHAT</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>MODE OF COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>OUTCOME SOUGHT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pesticide Use Policy</td>
<td>Once only/Infrequently</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Community response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pest Control Plans</td>
<td>Periodically</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Community response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticide Applications</td>
<td>Regularly/Monthly</td>
<td>Notification</td>
<td>No response sought</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Operational details of how consultation and notification is effected (e.g. web page, library etc), and the reaction to community responses, will vary with the Local Government Authority.

3.1 Community consultation – the Local Government Authority should provide:
- A reasonable opportunity for stakeholders and the community to provide comments on a draft pesticide use policy prior to adoption. This can be done by advertising the availability of the draft policy, where it is located, and how long the community has to provide comments;
- A register of chemically-sensitive residents and properties that require non-chemical methods of weed and pest control; and
- Access to an employee who is trained in the safe and effective use of pesticides, and who can:
  - Discuss the pesticide use policy and notification plan; and
  - Provide opportunities for accepting reports of:
    - Pesticide misuse; and/or
    - Unacceptable performance by contract Licensed Pest Management Technicians, or Local Government Authority employees responsible for the application of pesticides.
3.2 Periodic consultation of pest control plans:

For all outdoor public places, or categories of public places, a periodic pest control plan should be publicly available. Steps that could be followed in its development are:

- The draft plan is developed by the Local Government Authority;
- Notice of the draft plan advertised in local newspapers;
- The draft plan is placed in an appropriate public place (e.g. public library, council offices);
- Public comment is invited for an appropriate length of time (e.g. 28 days);
- The final version of the plan is prepared, taking into account any public comments received;
- Local Government Authority approval of the final plan is obtained (if required);
- Notice of final plan is advertised in local newspapers; and
- A copy of the final plan is placed in Council offices and Libraries, and on the Local Government Authority website;

The plan should include information on:

- The community groups who regularly use these public places;
- An estimate of the level of public use (high, medium or low);
- The reasons for using (or not using) pesticides in these places;
- The pesticides to be used and frequency of use;
- The method of application;
- The signage to be used at the application site;
- Human re-entry periods to be observed;
- Whether the pesticides will be applied by contract Licensed Pest Management Technicians or Local Government Authority employees; and
- Contact details of the nominated Local Government Authority employee who will be able to discuss the plan and pesticide use with the community.

Appendix 1 summarises the requirement, under the Pesticides Regulation 1995, for Local Government Authorities in New South Wales to prepare, lodge and receive approval for, a pesticide use notification plan.

3.3 Pesticide application notices:

- At the beginning of each month, or at other appropriate intervals;
  - Notices should be placed in the local newspaper notifying the community of the location, and details, of pesticide applications to be undertaken;
  - Notification should be sent out to residents on a Register.
- On the day of application, the operator should place portable signs at all entry points of the areas to be treated.
4.0 Implementation of the pest control program

**Aim**: To summarise the issues that should be considered prior to the implementation of the program, whether the pesticides are to be applied by Local Government Authority employees, or contract Licensed Pest Management Technicians.

Many of the items listed below will still apply if the specific pest control job is too small to go through the Tender process, and instead is managed by calling for a quotation.

### 4.1 Local Government Authority employees

**Ensure that all employees applying and handling pesticides:**

- Have received appropriate training in the type of pest control work required by the Local Government Authority, and in the safe and effective use of pesticides;
- Are adequately supervised by a person who also holds appropriate qualifications in this area;
- Are provided with:
  - Well maintained application equipment; and
  - Personal protective equipment that is appropriate to the pesticide being used.
- Understand their obligations and rights under Occupational Safety and Health legislation;
- Adopt safe practices at the work site, including the use of appropriate Occupational Safety and Health checklists and procedures;
- Comply with all applicable legislation, policies, codes and the Local Government Authority pesticide use plans.

### 4.2 Contracted pest management business

**Pest management businesses usually respond to the calling of a Tender by the Local Government Authority, by submitting a quotation. This section outlines:**

- The information for Tenderers; and
- The information that Tenderers need to supply.

#### 4.2.1 Information for Tenderers:

- The name of the Contract;
- A description of the work to be undertaken under the Contract (e.g. scope of work);
- A list of the pesticides to be used;
- The timetable for completion of the work;
- When the Local Government Authority will carry out site inspections;
- Request for a quotation;
- An invitation to all prospective tenderers to visit the work site(s) – either at a set time, or by arrangement;
Prerequisites for consideration of the Tenderer's quotation:

- Registration of the pest control firm;
- Licence details of the Pest Management Technicians employed by the business;
- Appropriate insurance cover which should include public liability and professional indemnity;
- Pesticides to be registered/permitted for the work;
- Quotation to be based on the use of nominated pesticides at label (or permit) rates and frequencies;
- Other requirements of the Local Government Authority.

Operational requirements:

The tenderer will:

- Provide ongoing operator training;
- Provide technical support and overall supervision to operators;
- Keep adequate records;
- Provide the names of operators that will be able to use pesticides;
- Be identifiable as such (e.g. vehicle signs and logos on uniforms) when carrying out the Contract;
- If required by the Local Government Authority, conduct advertising of the work;
- Provide road traffic management proposals (when appropriate);
- Properly maintain all vehicles and equipment in good working order and have the correct signage;
- Ensure that safety equipment and personal protective equipment are compliant with Occupational Safety and Health standards;
- Make adequate arrangements for:
  - The clean up of any pesticide spills;
  - The disposal of waste pesticides and drums; and
  - The decontamination of equipment after use.
- Conduct a risk assessment of public health and safety risks of the work site;
- Address the risks and benefits of each pesticide, or other non chemical method of control where required;
- Comply with management strategies for any specific risks on site; and
- Comply with all applicable legislation, Codes and Policies in their application of pesticides under Local Government Authority contracts.

4.2.2 Information Tenderers need to supply:

- A description of:
  - How the work, outlined in the Tender, will be carried out within the prescribed timeframe;
  - The contingency plans that will be in place to address any possible misapplication or contamination incident; and
  - The application equipment available to carry out the Contract;
  - The trained staff available to fulfil the Contract.
- A quotation for the work;
- Evidence of compliance with the Contract; and
- Any other relevant information pre-requisites;
- Evidence or assurance of compliance with the operational requirements;
- Adherence to all specifications laid down by the Local Government Authority for each job (e.g. access points, signage, pesticide chosen and rate of application);
- Testimonials from previously completed pest control.
5.0 Auditing the pest control program

**Aim:** To provide a process which will allow the Local Government Authority to formally assess the outcome of its pest control program. This may include seeking feedback from residents.

In some cases, it would be useful for the Local Government Authority to engage an independent organisation to develop and conduct the evaluation. This would assist in removing any conflict of interest or contractor bias.

The frequency of auditing will depend on the nature of the pest, the type of control program and when the outcomes are expected.

5.1 **The advantages of auditing or assessing the program are to:**

- Determine the effectiveness of the risk management process;
- To provide feedback to Local Government Authority policy and the pest control program; and
- To evaluate the performance of the Contractor(s) and assess their compliance with the requirements of the Tender and the program.

5.2 **An audit of the pest control program should include an assessment of the following elements:**

- The size of the program in relation to the resources used/available;
- The effectiveness of the pest control measures used in controlling the weed or pest;
- The effectiveness of the use of contract Licensed Pest Management Technicians in comparison with the use of Local Government Authority employees;
- The identification, and impact assessment, of off-target damage;
- The effectiveness of the contract between the Local Government Authority and the business firm/Licensed Pest Management Technicians;
- The level, and usefulness, of stakeholder and community involvement in the development of policy and the operations of the program;
- The success of the notification of pest control plans;
- The level of compliance with the requirement to notify;
- The number and nature of any complaints about the program;
- The effectiveness of the pest control programs of adjoining Local Government Authorities (where appropriate); and
- Recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
Appendix 1

Council pesticide use notification plan – NSW

In New South Wales, councils are required, under the Pesticides Regulation 1995, to prepare a pesticide use notification plan. This plan explains how a council will notify members of the public about the use of pesticides in the public places that it owns or controls. From 1 February 2007, pesticides cannot be used by councils in those areas unless the notification plan has been finalised and the steps in the plan have been followed.

Under the Regulation, the following information must be included in a council’s notification plan:

- The categories of outdoor public places owned or controlled by the council;
- Who regularly uses these places and the level of use;
- How and when council will provide those people with information on proposed pesticide uses;
- The special steps council will use when pesticides are used adjacent to sensitive places;
- What information will be provided;
- How the community will be informed of the plan;
- How future reviews of the plan will be conducted;
- Contact details for a council employee for anyone wishing to discuss the plan with council.

The Regulation does not specify how a council gives notice to the community, nor which pesticide uses notice should be given. However, the plan has to be lodged with, and approved by, the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change.

For further information, please refer to the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change website in Appendix 2.
Appendix 2

Useful websites

**Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW):** www.environment.nsw.gov.au

**Department of Health:** www.health.wa.gov.au

**Department of Agriculture and Food:** www.agric.wa.gov.au

**Department of Environment and Conservation:** www.dec.wa.gov.au

**Department of Commerce (Worksafe Division):** www.safetyline.wa.gov.au

**Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA):** www.apvma.gov.au

**ChemCert WA:** www.chemcertwa.com.au

**Bushland Management Guide (WA Local Government Authority):**

**Extension Toxicology Network:** extoxnet.orst.edu

**Drum Muster:** www.drummuster.com.au

**Chemclear:** www.chemclear.com.au

**MSDS:** www.msds.com
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