



Ordinary Meeting of Council

25 September 2019

**UNDER SEPARATE COVER
ATTACHMENTS**

ITEM 9.6

**QUEANBEYAN-PALERANG REGIONAL COUNCIL
ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL**

ATTACHMENTS – 25 September 2019 Page i

Item 9.6	Weeds Advisory Committee	
	<i>Attachment 1</i>	<i>QPRC Biosecurity Weed Program 2019-20 1</i>
	<i>Attachment 2</i>	<i>QPRC Biosecurity Program Report 2018-19.....7</i>
	<i>Attachment 3</i>	<i>Snowy Monaro Region Biosecurity (Weeds) Advisory Committee Charter..... 10</i>

QUEANBEYAN-PALERANG REGIONAL COUNCIL

Council Meeting Attachment

25 SEPTEMBER 2019

ITEM 9.6 WEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ATTACHMENT 1 QPRC BIOSECURITY WEED PROGRAM 2019-20

QPRC Biosecurity Weed Control Program 2019-20 (DRAFT)

Introduction

The Queanbeyan-Palerang area is home to significant natural values and productive grazing land that are continually under threat from the biosecurity impacts of weeds, pest animals and diseases. Like everyone else, Council has a duty to manage biosecurity impacts on its land and from its activities. QPRC also plays a critical role in weed management through its legislated functions as Local Control Authority (s.371 of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*). As such, Biosecurity management falls within Council's direct sphere of responsibility.

QPRC's Biosecurity program (24.3) has four main outputs:

- Biosecurity weed control on council land (24.3.1)
- Biosecurity weed education, inspection and enforcement (24.3.2)
- Biosecurity weed survey and management planning (24.3.3)
- Biosecurity weed strategic projects (*proposed* 24.3.4)

Each of these activities are discussed in more detail below.

All staff and contractors must also comply with their general biosecurity duty under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, in particular to prevent the spread of priority weeds during works associated with council operations. The broader biosecurity issues of pest animals and diseases tend to be coordinated by other agencies (specifically Local Land Services), however Council has an obligation to manage these impacts on our own land.

In addition, other programs within Council manage vegetation that may be considered 'weeds' (i.e. a plant growing where it is not wanted) for a range of purposes. These include natural area restoration, road safety, bushfire hazard reduction and urban amenity.

Priorities identified for 2019/20:

- Maintain existing programs to meet legal responsibilities within resource constraints
- Develop strategies to increase resources for core responsibilities
- Deliver strategic projects and seek additional grants to maintain fixed-term staff
- Improve the risk-based approach to weed management planning
- Develop local plans/strategies as appropriate to meet program needs
- Improve local weed management education, including via the QPRC website
- Increase effectiveness and reduce safety risk (specifically use of Amphibious ATV)
- Increase collaboration with other QPRC programs to improve council-wide outcomes

Biosecurity weed control on council land

Like all land managers and individuals, Council has a general biosecurity duty under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* to control weeds on our own property. Specifically, we must prevent new weeds from entering our land, eradicate new weeds before they become established and minimise the impacts of established weeds.

The basic requirement of this activity is the regular inspection, assessment and control of priority weeds posing a biosecurity impact on 2,100ha of Council-managed land and similar area of linear road reserve. Council's seasonal control program targets known sites with high priority weed species that need to be eradicated (such as Fireweed and Gorse). Beyond that, most resources are currently dedicated to controlling the more widespread weed species identified as a priority in the regional plan, with resources prioritised by locality according to the NSW weed risk assessment methodology.

There is a lack of detailed risk assessments to determine priority sites (refer also to the 'Biosecurity weed survey and management planning' output below). We are progressively moving away from the species-based control program required for declared weeds under the previous *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* to the risk-based approach required under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, which will see more strategic weed control where the effort has the most benefit. As part of this process, a current review of all council-managed land (including Crown land) will more accurately and consistently classify land as operational or community, and appropriately categorise all community land. Information on priority assets, such as endangered species and ecological communities, being collated for this process will also help identify priority sites for the control of widespread weeds. The identification and assessment of priority environmental sites on roadsides also needs to progress.

Furthermore, Council operations can act as carriers of weed material and the hygiene practices of staff and contractors is currently inconsistent, requiring hygiene policies, procedures, training and implementation across many branches. While this is the responsibility of all individuals and programs, it is logical that the Biosecurity program coordinate a consistent approach.

Biosecurity weed education, inspection and enforcement

This activity is focussed on meeting Council's commitments under the South East Weeds Action Program 2015-20. In particular, it supports our legislated functions as a Local Control Authority for inspection of land in connection with weed control functions.

Weed education activities are focussed on the provision of relevant material to land managers associated with property inspections. This is supported by field days and rural shows, along with longer term development of behaviour change programs.

The primary purpose of weed inspections is to detect priority weeds and ultimately ensure they are properly managed. Emphasis is placed on finding new weed incursions and eradicating them before they become established, supplemented by protecting priority assets from widespread weeds. The risk-based inspection schedule, based on the South East Weeds Action Program 2015-2020, comprises:

1. Low frequency inspections - Comprehensive inspection of all properties >1ha and 'over-the-fence' survey of urban areas, whole locality at a time, nominally every four years aligned to council's Delivery Program and State of the Environment report period (~2,000/year)
2. Medium frequency inspections – Targeted inspection and development/updating of site weed management plans for priority sites a second time every four years (highly productive agricultural land and environmental protection sites is estimated to cover ~10% of the council area), to assist ongoing protection of the economy and environment (~200/year)
3. High frequency inspections – Targeted inspection of sites with known infestations of priority weeds, at least once every year to ensure sufficient ongoing control (~200/year)
4. Very high frequency inspections – Targeted inspection of high risk pathways for new weed incursions, one to three times per year according to risk level (~1840km roadside and 140 sites/year)

It is noted that the Low and Medium frequency inspection targets are unlikely to be achieved as planned in 2019/20 unless the ongoing lack of resources is resolved.

Biosecurity Officers have broad powers of entry to premises, however the standard procedure includes posting an advisory letter to property owners before conducting a weed inspection. Information on the Biosecurity program is provided and participation in the inspection encouraged, followed by a formal report documenting any biosecurity weed issues detected.

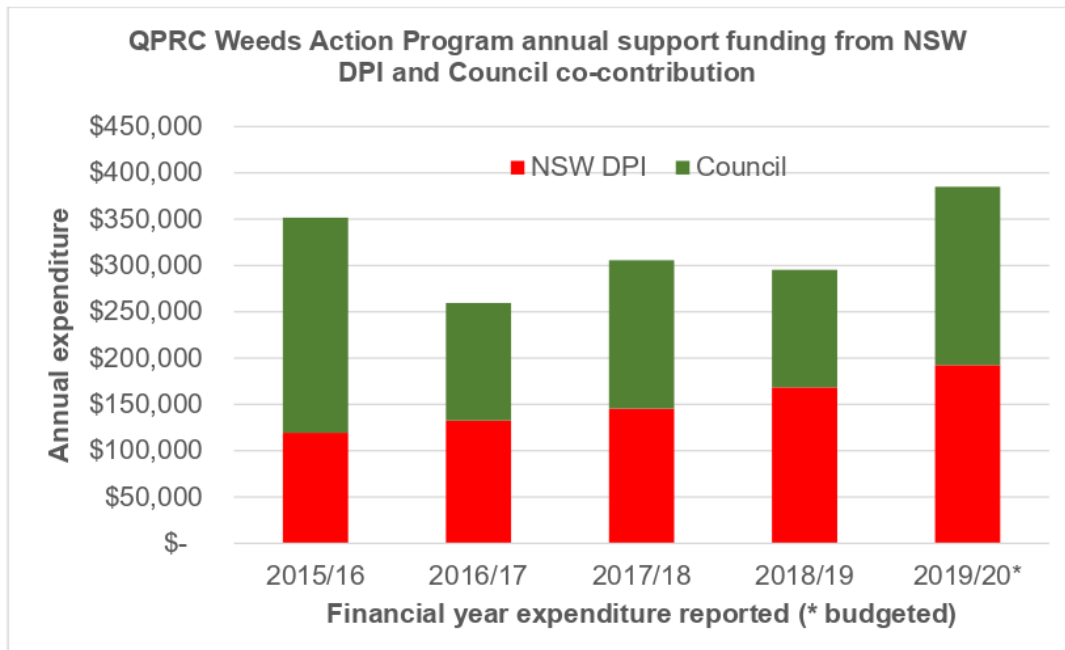
The former Palerang Council had a strong Noxious Weeds program, employing three officers and featuring innovation and continuous improvement. Projects initiated by that program won the NSW Local Government Award for weed management four years out of five from 2012/13-16/17. The former Queanbeyan City Council had also been improving its Noxious Weeds Program, employing a full-time fixed-term Noxious Weeds Officer in the years leading up to amalgamation and adopting a policy of inspecting every rural property every two years.

Unfortunately this program has suffered several setbacks in recent years, in addition to operational impacts caused by the amalgamation and restructure, including:

- loss of the QCC Noxious Weeds Officer position, which was vacant at the time of amalgamation;
- replacement of the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* with the significantly different *Biosecurity Act 2015*; and
- additional mandatory data collection and reporting requirements for the NSW Biosecurity Information System.

NSW Department of Primary Industries provide annual project funding through the Weeds Action Program (WAP) to support councils in implementing their weed inspection and extension programs. Historically, the WAP project funding required at least \$ for \$ co-contribution from council funds and the former Palerang and Queanbeyan City Councils contributed around \$2:\$1. WAP funding has significantly increased in recent years to help address additional expectations of councils. In contrast, QPRC's co-contribution and total program funding dropped significantly after amalgamation and has not regained its former combined commitment level. While a \$:\$ commitment has been budgeted for in 2019/20, QPRC's contribution of \$193,000 remains less than the combined \$232,000 from the former councils in 2015/16 despite a 61% increase in support funding.

The former Palerang Council had a particularly strong enforcement program under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*, and in one year issued more than 500 weed control notices. There has been limited enforcement since the introduction of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* due to the need for more complex evidence collection to prove an offence, however landholders have been progressively informed of their biosecurity duties and if these have not been complied with then enforcement actions will likely become more common over time.



Biosecurity weed survey and management planning

This activity is focussed on meeting QPRC's Local Control Authority functions related to planning and reporting, while supporting the effective and efficient delivery of other biosecurity activities. In particular, Council must:

- develop, implement, co-ordinate and review weed control programs;
- keep records about the exercise of the local control authority's functions; and
- report to the Secretary about the exercise of the local control authority's functions.

Information on the distribution of weeds obtained during inspection and control activities is collated and analysed to guide risk assessments and program planning. Significant changes have been made in recent years to meet the requirements of monthly reporting to the State-wide Biosecurity Information System.

Plans are being developed to manage priority weeds. These are guided by the *South East Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2017-22* and standard weed risk assessments completed for every locality. General control requirements have been identified for priority weeds and are being provided to landholders in property inspection reports, however should probably be formalised in a local plan/policy.

The identification and assessment of potential priority sites is a significant issue to be addressed. Ideally any site of economic, environmental or social importance that is threatened by weed impacts should be identified and a basic plan of management developed. These sites would then be inspected every two years – once every four years during comprehensive inspections of that locality and a second time every four years when a more detailed assessment would produce/update a site weed management plan. This can be supported by Council's professional aerial survey capacity to include a high resolution site image every four years to objectively document change (hopefully improvements) over time.

Biosecurity weed strategic projects

Council actively seeks external funding to support strategic weed management projects beyond current capacity. Some projects support Council's values of Innovation and Continuous Improvement by piloting new approaches to routine activities, while others assist the community and partner agencies with priority weed management issues. The following projects have secured funding at the start of 2019/20. Additional grants have been applied for and others will be sought to supplement these projects as opportunities arise.

SOS Weed control

Ten year project to control berry-bearing bushes within two project areas to protect threatened woodland birds from predatory Currawongs that feed on the berries.

Ox-eye daisy weed management

Regional project to map isolated infestations of the priority weed ox-eye daisy, raise awareness, and undertake initial control works on private land.

Regional SEWAP admin

Use funds held from when Palerang/QPRC administered the South East Weeds Action Program 2015-20 to provide technical and administrative support services to the new lead agency, South East Local Land Services.

Weed control - WaterNSW land

Manage biosecurity weeds on WaterNSW land at Bombay to protect the threatened Bombay bossiaea plant that only occurs within the QPRC area.

Weed control - Crown land Bombay

Manage biosecurity weeds on Crown land at Bombay to protect the threatened Bombay bossiaea plant that only occurs within the QPRC area.

Weed control - Crown land Carwoola

Manage biosecurity weeds on Crown land at Carwoola to protect threatened species/community and adjacent nature reserve.

Beefing up Braidwood

Develop a local weed management plan to protect the priority economic asset of pasture production around Braidwood, leading to individual property plans and weed control assistance during drought.

Biosecurity - At what cost?

Assess economic impacts of weeds on agricultural land in south east NSW, ultimately to identify potential priority economic assets for more frequent inspections

Biosecurity - No space 4 weeds @ my place

Develop online tools to deliver relevant weed management information by property address, with capacity for adding a broader range of environmental education material.

Gorsebusters – Upper Shoalhaven

Develop an education and inspection program to determine the extent and control required for the priority weed Gorse at sites downstream of known isolated infestations.

Put out the Fireweed in Googong

Develop an education and inspection program to detect and control the priority weed Fireweed in the Googong township, the only known infestation within the QPRC area.

QUEANBEYAN-PALERANG REGIONAL COUNCIL

Council Meeting Attachment

25 SEPTEMBER 2019

ITEM 9.6 WEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ATTACHMENT 2 QPRC BIOSECURITY PROGRAM REPORT 2018-19

QPRC Biosecurity Program 2018-19 Summary report

QPRC's Biosecurity program (24.3) has four main outputs:

- Biosecurity weed control on council land (24.3.1)
- Biosecurity weed education, inspection and enforcement (24.3.2)
- Biosecurity weed survey and management planning (24.3.3)
- Biosecurity weed strategic projects (*proposed* 24.3.4)

Biosecurity weed control on council land

Seasonal control of priority weeds posing a biosecurity risk on council land was conducted mostly as scheduled. While two Weed Sprayer positions are permanent, one occupant has been seconded off for 3 years so the position is being filled on a fixed term basis. Two other weed sprayer positions are funded by special projects, providing extra capacity and flexibility from a total of four staff. This is particularly important during the St Jon's wort season, when even four weed controllers cannot complete comprehensive control on all Council land at a time when other contractors are difficult to find.

A total of 13,196km of roadside land was recorded as controlled for a variety of weeds according to seasonal priorities.

A total of 302ha of biosecurity weeds were controlled on council-managed reserves.

Biosecurity weed education, inspection and enforcement

The inspection program was stretched in 2018/19 due to the ongoing shortage of officers to cover the new council area, additional complexities of the new legislation, and mandatory recording requirements for every inspection.

The following outputs were achieved:

Activity	Number
4-year inspection of all properties >1ha (number of properties)	1509
4-year survey of urban areas (km ² or number of towns)	8
Additional 4-year inspection of priority sites (number of sites)	14
Re-inspection of compliance sites (number of sites)	153
Inspect all high risk pathways (km of roadside)	1840
Inspect all high risk sites (number of sites)	140
Participation at public events (number of events)	7
Biosecurity Undertaking or Direction issued (number)	0

A new weed incursion (species not previously recorded in that locality/suburb) was detected during a high risk pathways inspection - Whiskey grass in Jerrabattgulla.

Two new weed infestations (species previously recorded in that locality/suburb, but new infestation not likely linked to a known infestation) were detected. Another infestation of around 1000 Fireweed plants was found in Googong, where infestations continue to appear and persist despite an ongoing search and destroy program over many years. Strategic project funding has been obtained for an intensive education, inspection and control project during 2019/20 as this is the only locality in the QPRC area known to have Fireweed. Ox-eye daisy was detected in Mongarlowe, and while there is funding available to assist with control

through the Ox-eye project the drought conditions currently make it difficult to use approved chemicals.

Biosecurity weed survey and management planning

All weed inspection data collected was cleaned, collated and submitted to the Biosecurity Information System as required. Glitches in the data management system have been effectively managed.

Limited resources were available to complete further survey and analysis for longer term strategic planning purposes.

High resolution aerial photography was obtained over several priority sites, mostly funded by grants and contracts. This included ~70km of road reserve in environmental protection zones and surveys along the Shoalhaven River for the threatened Bombay bossiaea plants and weeds that threaten it.

Biosecurity weed strategic projects

Completed projects include:

- Weed management – Crown land Captains Flat
- Weed management – Crown land Hoskinstown
- Weed management – Crown land Wamboin
- Weed management – WaterNSW land Bombay

Projects continuing into 2019/20 include:

- SOS weed control
- Ox-eye daisy weed management
- Regional SEWAP admin
- Weed management – Crown land Carwoola

Projects carrying over to commence in 2019/20 include:

- Biosecurity – At what cost?
- Biosecurity – No weeds at my place
- Beefing up Braidwood
- Weed management – Crown land Bombay
- Gorsebusters – Upper Shoalhaven
- Put out the Fireweed in Googong

Several projects have been delayed due to a fixed term Project Officer(s) position not being approved to complete those projects and coordinate associated contractors. It is anticipated that projects will commence in early 2019/20 as they need to be completed during that financial year.

Additional grants have been sought for priority Crown Land in the Carwoola and Lake George localities, the latter being land under Council's management.

QUEANBEYAN-PALERANG REGIONAL COUNCIL

Council Meeting Attachment

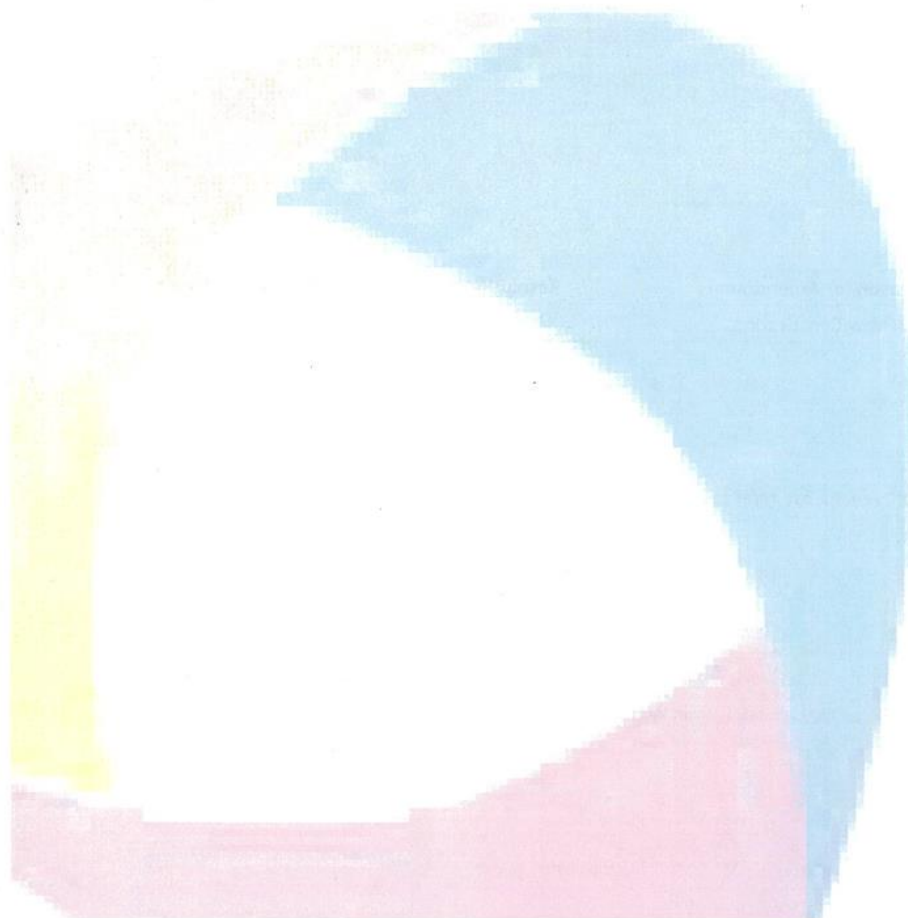
25 SEPTEMBER 2019

ITEM 9.6 WEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ATTACHMENT 3 SNOWY MONARO REGION BIOSECURITY (WEEDS)
ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARTER



Snowy Monaro Region Biosecurity (Weeds) Advisory Committee Charter



Record of Versions

Date Published	Reason for Amendments	Resolution	Author/Document Owner
06/09/2018	New Constitution	305/18	Manager Biosecurity Weeds

Uncontrolled document when printed. Please refer to intranet for controlled document

Contents

1	ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE	5
2	Title of the Committee	5
3	Purpose of the Committee	5
4	Power of the Committee	5
5	Delegation of Power	5
6	Structure and Composition of the Committee	6
7	Appointment	6
8	Quorum of Committee	6
9	Principal Office Bearers	7
9.1	Chairperson of Committee	7
9.2	Deputy Chairperson	7
9.3	Secretary	7
10	Meetings of the Committee	7

1 ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

The primary objective of this committee is to aid and discuss the management of biosecurity matter (weeds) in the Local Government Area (LGA) of Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) and to promote biosecurity as a shared responsibility between government, industry and the community.

2 Title of the Committee

The title of the Committee shall be the "Snowy Monaro Region Biosecurity (Weeds) Advisory Committee".

3 Purpose of the Committee

- To provide a regional forum to develop strategies and make recommendations to Council, Land Management Agencies, Community Groups and Landholders for the implementation of weed control programs.
- To provide the forum by which information and strategies are actively shared between Council and the Community through the Committee's membership.
- To initiate and participate in regional programs and to actively encourage participation of other stakeholders where benefits flow to the Council and participating stakeholders. Each program is to be considered on its merits.
- To provide input into State, regional and local weeds strategies where such strategies influence the management of weeds within the LGA.
- To present a common approach to Government in applications for grant funding for invasive weed control on the Snowy Monaro

4 Power of the Committee

By virtue of Section 355 of the Local Government Act 1993, it is enacted that the Council may delegate to a Committee the relevant powers as are specifically mentioned.

This committee only has advisory power. Agreement on a course of action shall be by consensus with recommendations then made to Council

5 Delegation of Power

Subject to requirements of Section 377 of the Local Government Act 1993, the Council delegates to the Committee the power to carry out the functions as listed within this Agreement. The Committee does not have the authority to expend a Council's, or other organisations, funds without the express authority of the Council or Organisation.

6 Structure and Composition of the Committee

The Committee shall comprise of a minimum of ten members and a maximum of twenty four members and shall consist of Council staff and other appropriate stakeholder groups as follows:

- Nominated Councillor representative(s) – maximum of two
- SMRC Manager Biosecurity
- A representative from the following
 - NSW Department of Primary Industries
 - NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (NPWS)
 - Forestry Corporation of NSW
 - Upper Snowy Landcare
 - Snowy River Interstate Landcare
 - Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare
 - NSW Farmers Association
 - South East Local Land Services
 - Snowy Hydro Limited
 - Roads and Maritime Services
 - Essential Energy
 - Friends of Grasslands
 - John Holland Rail
 - Monaro Farming Systems
 - Nimmitabel Advancement Group
 - Rural Fire Service
 - Local agronomists
 - Elders
 - Landmark (Cooma & Bombala)
 - Cooma Rural
 - South East Rural

Independent experts and members of the community are encouraged to attend and speak at a Committee meeting, though shall not maintain voting rights.

7 Appointment

The term of this Committee will be that of the term of Council (4 years). At the end of each term the composition and function of the Committee will be reviewed and recommendation made to Council.

8 Quorum of Committee

A quorum will consist of six members and must include the Council representative.

If a Committee member is unable to attend a meeting they shall forward relevant information to an alternate to attend the meeting in their place.

A member of an organisation who fails to attend three consecutive meetings without submitting a satisfactory explanation will forfeit its membership on the Committee.

9 Principal Office Bearers

9.1 Chairperson of Committee

The Committee shall, at its first meeting and each two years thereafter, or on resignation, elect a Councillor as Chairperson. The role of the chairperson is to keep order at meetings and co-ordinate with the Committee Secretary.

9.2 Deputy Chairperson

The Committee shall, at its first meeting and each two years thereafter, or on resignation, elect a Deputy Chairperson. In the event of the absence of the Chairperson at a meeting, the Deputy Chairperson will act as Chairperson.

9.3 Secretary

- Council will provide support for all meetings and will work with the Chairperson and Biosecurity Manager to determine the content of the committee meetings.
- All records, including the agenda, minutes and any reports or recommendations will be prepared and kept by the Secretary.
- Provide members of the Committee with adequate notice of a meeting confirming the date, time and venue. An agenda will be forwarded to each member of the committee as soon as practicable.
- Maintain any action items list.
- Coordinate with the Chairperson to ensure the minutes of the meeting are promptly finalised, signed by the Chairperson and distributed to all members for confirmation as soon as practicable after each meeting.
- Ensuring minutes of the Committee have been included in the papers of the next Council meeting.

10 Meetings of the Committee

The Committee will meet four times a year, rotating between the major centres of Berridale, Bombala and Cooma and at any other centre within the Snowy Monaro as deemed appropriate by the Chairperson. At its first meeting the committee will determine the date, time and locations of regular meetings. Extra meetings may be held at the discretion of the Chairperson.

Committee recommendations will be documented in the minutes, and adopted by consensus.