

LOCAL NEWS

Weed battle rolls on

No resolution in funding conundrum for Nepean River weed management

PHOTO: NEPEAN RIVER BOARD

ALINA HIGGINS
The search between Hawkesbury Shire Council (HSC) and the NSW Government over weed management funding along the Nepean River, has in operational funding to weed management, and remains in the dark about future funding.
Earlier this month, HSC met with NSW Minister for Environment, Heritage and Water, Luke Donohoe, and Federal Assistant Minister for Environmental Management, Tim Watts in discussion.
"We're waiting for between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 annually which covers our operational funding, which allows us to keep our staff and staff all in our local area," HSC Chairman, Nathan Zampagna said.
"It means the plant and equipment that we're using to do the work is not being replaced, and we're not getting a lot of maintenance and then the boats come," he said.
"I had some people on saying, 'well that problem doesn't exist anymore, the boats would have cleared out the river', but it's only been a short period of time."
Mr. Donohoe, who allocated \$200,000 in 2018 to support weed management infrastructure, said the health of the Nepean River needs ongoing support.
"The weeds were all gone in the river for one week in 2018 for the health of the river, but for the safety of people who swim," he said.
"We're here and we're ready to do the river right now after the recent floods. If the weeds, we can become compliant and allow the weeds to come back."
Greater Sydney Local Land Services General Manager, Steve Diller, said that weed management funding options are currently being assessed.
"We need to have a good idea of what we're going to do in the future, and we've had a lot of feedback from the community, and that's not just from the local government," he said.
Mr. Zampagna said the fight has now shifted from the river itself to weed management infrastructure, he said.



harvesting, and this year is a hard season for the industry.
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Raising awareness of the need for Hawkesbury-Nepean River Health

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Friday, June 25, 2021 « the western weekend

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ALENA HIGGINS

The stoush between Hawkesbury River County Council (HRCC) and the NSW Government over weed management continues to wage.

HRCC, which manages weeds along the Nepean River, had its operational funding for its weed harvester pulled last year, and remains in the dark about its future funding.

Earlier this month, HRCC met with Federal MP for Lindsay Melissa McIntosh and Federal Assistant Minister for Environmental Management Trevor Evans to discuss the issue.

"We're asking for between \$100,000 and \$150,000 annually, which restores our operational funding, which allows us to keep our staff and that skill set on board," HRCC Chairman, Nathan Zamprogno said.

"It means the plant and equipment isn't sitting rusting in our depot, it means that it can be out there on the river for as many weeks as needed throughout the year."

Mr Zamprogno said HRCC was very disappointed with the State Government's



HRCC's Chris Dewhurst and Nathan Zamprogno with Lindsay MP Melissa McIntosh and Assistant Minister for Environmental Management Trevor Evans aboard Nepean Belle.

response to date and praised Ms McIntosh's advocacy.

"We've got the heads of Olympic rowing organisations sounding the alarm, you've got a multi-council body sounding the

alarm... and we've had dismissive, perfunctory responses, and that's not good enough."

Mr Zamprogno said the fight has shifted from the urgent need

I was pleased to join the Federal [MP for Lindsay, Melissa McIntosh](#) as she hosted a visit to the Hawkesbury-Nepean River of the Federal Assistant Minister for the Environment, the [Hon. Trevor Evans MP](#).

The purpose of the visit was to raise awareness of river health, a responsibility I share as the [Chairman of the Hawkesbury River County Council](#), which covers [four Council areas](#) and much of the river from Warragamba to Wiseman's Ferry.

We have specialised plant and equipment at HRCC which is essential to keep the river free of weeds, and were disappointed when the State Government pulled some key operational funding last year – just as we completed the salvage, refurbishment and recommissioning of our giant 'Weedosaurus' harvester with a \$130,000 Federal grant.

My belief is that taxpayers, to say nothing of key river user groups like Rowing Australia,

representing our Olympic team training on the river for the Tokyo games, expect the tiers of government to work together co-operatively to undertake this critical and ongoing work.

Minister Evans was a thoughtful listener and we gave him a detailed account of the effects of the floods earlier this year, the temporary reprieve it has given us as it flushed the river, and the short-sightedness of forcing us to sell our plant and equipment when weeds, like grass, will inevitably grow back. This is a warning [I have delivered before](#).

The above story appears in [this week's Western Weekender](#), and follows earlier coverage [back in February](#).



A Salvinia outbreak that choked the Hawkesbury River in 2004. We can't go back this.

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