

OFFICERS REPORT**ALTERNATIVE TO GLYPHOSATE**

Submitting Councillor: Cr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Notes the current social and environmental concerns about the Glyphosate including:*
 - a. *The classification of glyphosate as ‘probably carcinogenic to humans’ by the World Health Organisation’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)ⁱ;*
 - b. *The outcome of recent American Court cases¹ in which it was decided that certain products containing glyphosate were a substantial factor in causing the Non-Hodgkins lymphoma suffered by the claimantsⁱⁱ;*
2. *Approves Council participation in the MAV/Deakin University study on weed management strategy-alternative to Glyphosate, and have a report back to Council as soon as practicable.*

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There is a current opportunity to partner with Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Deakin University and approx. 30 other Councils for a comprehensive independent review of Glyphosate against best practice alternatives currently available to the market. This review will commence with a study of current international literature, while also conducting in situ trials over a 12 month period, which assess Glyphosate against other chemical and mechanical control methods. This assessment will be conducted against a matrix of: effectiveness of control; safety – environmental, public and operator; soil impacts and financial costs and implications.

The cost of this research based would be shared, with Councils contribution estimated to be between \$5,000 and \$10,000 based on the final number of participants. This work is projected to be completed in late 2020 with the report available to Council in early 2021. The more significant budget implications would then be determined on completion of the report and required maintenance practices and required resourcing if use of glyphosate is further phased out.

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

Integrated Weed Management planning and implementation is a core discipline of any Open Space operation. Horticultural leaders have been active members on the MAV Glyphosate Working Group, which has aided in informing future collective responses from MAV and participating Councils and other authorities.

¹ *Pilliod v. Monsanto Co; Dewayne Johnson v. Monsanto Company and Edwin Hardeman v. Monsanto Co*

Working with the MAV project with Deakin would allow for a greater collaboration of knowledge, as input from over 30 Councils would give an overview of current practices within the Local Government sector.

Ongoing resource impacts would be determined by the report, with a Business Case to be developed based on the recommendations of the final report when submitted. For example if the report determined glyphosate should be phased out and hand weeding completed of all high profile garden beds, a request for additional EFT's to match the level of work required may be necessary. If a reasonable cost option is not found and additional resources are not provided, then it is possible that the level of service will drop and this would impact on community satisfaction and the local environment.

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

Council's OHS Policy highlights taking all reasonable steps to advance work safety conditions, which is backed up by continued investigations into weed management and alternatives to glyphosate use.

The Monash Open Space Strategy states the provision of good quality future open space as a priority for the community, while the Biodiversity Strategy highlights weed invasion as one of the primary threats to biodiversity within the municipality. Both of these strategies have emphasised the need for continual improvement in weed management methods, which will be informed by the conclusions of this collaborative research project.

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

Council has been progressively reducing the use of Glyphosate over the last 10 years by choosing a variety of alternate methods of weed control e.g. increased mowing or trimming. – (Refer to Weed Management Update January 2020 attached). Council's Horticulture field officers have been applying herbicides in line with the regulations from Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and Work Safe. The work practices have also been tested by Councils use of the Safety Map accreditation.

The Horticulture Department's current Weed Management Plan, which looks at glyphosate's current position as one of a selection of weed control measures available to field officers. This Weed Management Plan is a working document that has continued to be developed as new control strategies have been trialled for targeted works.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Worksafe, guided by APVMA's position, have declared glyphosate safe to use when used according to label instructions. They have also provided practical information relating to the consideration of all alternatives to avoid its use, and then risk reduction when no alternative is possible. This includes training, personal protective equipment and best practice application methods. This methodology applies to all chemicals we use and is backed up by all officers involved with chemical spraying at Council completing an AgVet Chemical Users Course which is the industry standard for chemical usage training.

Other relevant background information is that:

1. The World Health Organisation's international Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifying glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans" in March 2015.

In 2016 a new report from the United Nations and World Health Organisation concluded that glyphosate is 'unlikely to pose a carcinogenic risk to humans from exposure through the diet'.ⁱ

2. The European Chemical Agency classifies glyphosate as causing serious eye damage based solely on the hazardous properties of the substance but not the likelihood and risk of exposure. This could mean serious eye damage could be a result of prolonged direct contact to the eye of the raw substance. Current directive from Worksafe and Australian Pesticides and veterinary Medicines Authority is that glyphosate is safe to use when label instructions are followed.

The ECHA website links a European Food Safety Authority peer review publication which highlights that ecotoxicology risk for bees was low.

3. Regarding a higher risk of developing Non Hodgkin lymphoma in humans the Leukaemia Foundation Australia released a statement in June 2019 stating it accepts the position of the APVMA and encouraged them to complete an assessment of potential risk and support a scientific approach to its regulation.ⁱⁱ
4. Link to recent article on which countries have banned or restricted glyphosate use:
<https://www.baumhedlundlaw.com/toxic-tort-law/monsanto-roundup-lawsuit/where-is-glyphosate-banned/>

ⁱ <https://www.chemistryworld.com/news/who-clarifies-glyphosate-risks/1010208.article>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.leukaemia.org.au/media-center/roundup-position-statement/>

ⁱ Environmental Sciences Europe, Volume 31 (2019)

ⁱⁱ <https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/bayer-ordered-to-pay-couple-2-9b-in-roundup-cancer-lawsuit-20190514-p51n06.html>