

ANNUAL NUTRIENT SURVEY for Local Government Authorities

2023 Town of Cambridge Nutrient Management Score Card

The Swan and Canning River systems, and many wetlands, are suffering from regular, and sometimes toxic, algal blooms. These blooms occur due to excessive inputs of nutrients, particularly phosphorus and nitrogen, combined with low water flows and warm temperatures. Local authorities are responsible for nutrient use and management on turfed areas and in reserves, in drainage systems and in local planning decisions and thus have the opportunity to lead the community by setting examples in best practice.

Each year Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Perth are surveyed on their nutrient practices by the Phosphorus Awareness Project of the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare (SERCUL). The survey is broken up into different sections including nutrient monitoring, fertiliser applications to foreshore areas, nutrient management, water quality monitoring, development control and nutrient education. The results from the questions asked in the survey have been used to provide a Score Card for each LGA that responded and clearly show how the LGA is performing and where and how improvements can be made. LGAs should also refer to the Annual Nutrient Survey for Local Government Authorities Results 2023 report (www.sercul.org.au/fertilisewise) for further recommendations on how to implement nutrient Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Please note that not all of the questions asked in the survey were used to determine the overall best management practice score. Any additional information about nutrient practices provided by an LGA is summarised at the end of this scorecard.

2023 Overall Best Management Practice Score – 86% EXCELLING

The Town of Cambridge has excelled in implementing nutrient BMPs in 2022/23. Further improvements can be made in the areas of nutrient monitoring, fertiliser applications, water quality monitoring and development controls.

RESPONSE KEY:

BMP has been achieved BMP has NOT been achieved
 Not Applicable Response not assessed

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE (BMP) KEY:

Excelling Above Average Average
 Below Average Unsatisfactory

NUTRIENT MONITORING

QUESTION	RESPONSE	SECTION BMP
Were regular soil nutrient tests, soil moisture tests &/or leaf tissue analyses conducted in any grass/turf areas?	YES	EXCELLING
Was analysis conducted by a lab affiliated with ASPAC?	YES	
Was plant available phosphorus in the soil measured using an appropriate test?	YES	
Were rates of phosphorus determined by soil testing and Phosphorus Retention Index (PRI) results?	YES	

The Town performed soil and moisture testing and leaf tissue analysis of its golf courses, soil and leaf testing of its sports fields and leaf tissue analysis of its irrigated parks. It did not conduct any testing or analysis in foreshore areas. All of these areas are fertilised and irrigated. It is recommended that the Town undertakes regular soil testing and leaf tissue analysis of all turf areas that are fertilised and moisture testing if these areas are irrigated.

FORESHORE FERTILISER APPLICATIONS

QUESTION	RESPONSE	SECTION BMP
Are there grassed/turfed foreshore areas within the LGA?	YES	BELOW AVERAGE
Was fertiliser added to grassed/turfed foreshore reserves?	YES	
Did the fertiliser contain phosphorus?	YES	
Was it a controlled release solid fertiliser or a liquid fertiliser applied to foliage?	NO	
Was there a buffer zone around waterbodies in which no fertiliser was applied?	YES	
Was any nutrient testing completed of foreshore areas?	NO	

Foreshore areas outside a buffer zone were irrigated and fertilised with a complete inorganic (phosphorus containing), slow release fertiliser. Areas outside the buffer zone should be fertilised and irrigated according to regular soil and moisture testing and leaf tissue analysis, which was not performed in 2022/23. Any fertiliser applied should be phosphorus free and a controlled release solid fertiliser or a liquid fertiliser applied to foliage.

General Fertiliser Recommendations:

Analysis of the fertiliser application information indicates that the Town applied Energy Turf, which is a complete inorganic, slow release fertiliser, to passive turf (and perhaps also foreshore areas outside the buffer zone) at rates above the maximum recommended single application rate of water soluble phosphorus for a low to medium PRI soil (<10 kg/ha). It was not specified how much of that phosphorus was water soluble. Without the PRI of the soil being determined and soil testing undertaken on a regular basis, the amount required and able to be applied in a single application without leaching, if any, is not able to be accurately assessed. It is recommended that regular soil and leaf tissue testing be conducted prior to the application of any fertiliser. In irrigated areas the Town should also conduct regular soil moisture tests. It is recommended that fertiliser only be applied in spring and autumn as summer fertilising encourages the overuse of water and turf may grow excessively, while fertiliser applied during winter can be washed into stormwater drains or leached into groundwater. Many grass species are also dormant or semi-dormant in winter. Employees involved in turf management would benefit from attending SERCULs Fertilise Wise Fertiliser Training in 2024.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

QUESTION	RESPONSE	SECTION BMP
Were structural BMPs in place to reduce nutrients entering waterbodies?	YES	EXCELLING
Were non-structural measures in place to prevent nutrients from grass clippings entering waterbodies directly or via stormwater drains?	YES	
Are there deciduous trees in parks and streetscapes?	YES	
Were non-structural measures in place to prevent nutrients from deciduous leaves entering waterbodies directly or via stormwater drains?	YES	
Were non-structural measures in place to prevent nutrients from sediment entering waterbodies directly or via stormwater drains?	YES	
Was a Nutrient and Irrigation Management Plan (NIMP) implemented for streetscapes?	YES	
Was there a policy to use local native plants as the first choice in public (LGA) and private (developers) landscaping?	YES	

It is recommended that the Town continue to implement its current practices, including not planting deciduous trees on verges or near waterbodies.

WATER QUALITY MONITORING

QUESTION	RESPONSE	SECTION BMP
Were wetlands regularly monitored for nutrient levels?	YES	AVERAGE
Were stormwater drains regularly monitored for nutrient levels?	NO	
Were compensating basins regularly monitored for nutrient levels?	N/A	

The Town regularly monitored nutrient levels in wetlands and reported the results to the community. It is recommended that they also monitor stormwater drains and report the results of this monitoring to the community. The Town reported having no compensating basins under its control.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

QUESTION	RESPONSE	SECTION BMP
Were there provisions in the Town Planning Scheme or Planning Policies to enforce environmental conditions on development?	YES	ABOVE AVERAGE
Did the LGA impose conditions on development which included Nutrient and Irrigation Management Plans (NIMPs)?	NO	
Did the LGA have mechanisms in place to regulate sediment management?	YES	

It is recommended that the Town imposes conditions requiring NIMPs on developments, monitors these for compliance and prosecutes developers that are not complying.

NUTRIENT EDUCATION

QUESTION	RESPONSE	SECTION BMP
Were dog poo bins and bags provided in parks and foreshore reserves?	YES	EXCELLING
Were measures taken to educate the public about not feeding bread to waterbirds in foreshore reserves and parks?	YES	
Were ratepayers provided with advice on best practice in fertiliser management according to soil type?	YES	
Was education provided about nutrient sources to waterways?	YES	

It is recommended that the Town continue to implement their current practices. In addition to what is currently being undertaken, SERCUL has relevant information on its website that can be linked to and can be engaged to deliver presentations about nutrients and their impact on waterways to schools, business and community groups through its Phosphorus Awareness Project. For more information on this education program and how it can assist the Town with nutrient education contact Natasha Bowden on 9458 5664.