

Two written statements from the Wet Tropics Management Authority to the ABC

Statement 1

The Wet Tropics Management Authority works with councils across the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to undertake maintenance activities on council-managed assets within and adjacent to the Area, through the issuing of permits. These permits set conditions for the use of glyphosate-based herbicide where mechanical weed removal is impractical or uneconomical. Authority permits also stipulate that:

- Any application of glyphosate-based herbicides can only be carried out by trained operators.
- Weedicides must be used selectively to avoid non-target plants.
- Surfactants must not be used in the vicinity of wetlands and waterways.
- Herbicides drift must be minimised. Other herbicides referenced in the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Pest Medicines Authority Permit may be used in accordance with their label instructions with the written permission of the Authority.

The Authority regularly reinforces these conditions through training and during ongoing liaison with local governments.

Though there may be impacts associated with the use of herbicides, the proliferation of invasive weeds is often a far greater threat to the integrity of the Outstanding Universal Values of the World Heritage Area.

Statement 2

How does WTMA ensure that the chemicals that local councils are using in the wet tropics area are frog safe and aquatic safe and that they do not leak into local waterways?

- Where regulated by the Authority, to ensure that the use of chemicals do not negatively impact environmental values of the World Heritage Area (including both species and waterways), permit conditions require that surfactants must not be used in the vicinity of wetlands and waterways and that herbicide drift is minimised. All chemical use must also be undertaken by appropriately qualified persons and must comply with manufacturing guidelines and regulatory requirements (e.g. Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority).

Is there any concern from WTMA about the use of glyphosate-based herbicides in the wet tropics area, after the recent decisions by courts in America to award substantial costs to users of glyphosate-based herbicides?

- We encourage councils to use the most eco-friendly products and methods wherever possible, and we will work closely with them to find the most sustainable and environmentally friendly solutions as they become available.
- It is understood that Douglas Shire Council has moved away from using glyphosate-based products and is now trialling steam treatment for roadside weeds. The efficacy and economics of this treatment is unknown.
- Though there may be impacts associated with the use of herbicides, the proliferation of invasive weeds is often a far greater threat to the integrity of the Outstanding Universal Values of the World Heritage Area

Do staff from WTMA ever use glyphosate-based herbicides in their work?

- Wet Tropics Management Authority staff do not engage in weed spraying.

Have any natural or organic herbicides been looked into for use across the Wet Tropics?

- The Authority is not aware of any natural or organic herbicides being used in the WHA.

Which councils has WTMA issued permits to, to allow them to use glyphosate-based herbicides in the wet tropics area?

- The following councils have been issued permits that conditions the use of herbicides:
 - Cairns Regional Council
 - Cassowary Coast Regional Council
 - Tablelands Regional Council
 - Mareeba Shire Council
 - Douglas Shire Council
 - Cook Shire Council
 - Hinchinbrook Shire Council
 - Townsville City Council
 - Charters Towers Regional Council