

5.10. ILLEGAL DUMPING STRATEGY

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DEPARTMENT: CEO Unit

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolves to adopt the Illegal Dumping Strategy 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Illegal dumping occurs in suburban streets, waterways and rural areas. It damages our environment, threatening wildlife and ecosystems, spreading weeds and vermin, and potentially placing public health at risk. It impacts on enjoyment of public spaces by making them look unsightly and uncared for. Illegal dumping causes financial costs for governments through prevention, compliance and clean up activities; to individuals through lower property values; and to businesses by impacting on tourism.

Council has committed to good environmental stewardship through its Corporate and Operational Plans and is committed to a 'zero tolerance' approach to litter and illegal dumping.

The Illegal Dumping Strategy details the impacts of illicit disposal of waste materials, a need for local situational awareness, an overview of best practice for councils responding to illegal dumping, and direction for the Douglas Shire Council's campaign to reduce the incidence and impact of illegal dumping in our region.

BACKGROUND

Illegal dumping includes bags of household rubbish and garden waste as well as items such as whitegoods, furniture and abandoned cars. It includes commercial or larger scale deposits of construction and demolition materials, car tyres and hazardous waste.

Illegal dumping is a constant and highly visible problem. As well as causing an eyesore, illegal dumping can have negative social impacts resulting from a decrease in amenity of our public spaces, negative environmental consequences for individual animals and entire ecosystems, and economic consequences for local governments, individuals and the region's economy.

While illegal dumping is regulated by the Queensland Government under the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011, and the Environmental Protection Act 1994, the major burden of prevention, investigation and prosecution of offenders and cleaning up from illegal dumping falls to local government.

COMMENT

Determining the extent of illegal dumping and its impact on the Douglas Shire is difficult due to the variety of behaviours and locations encompassed in the term but a thorough understanding of the specific local situation is necessary to effectively manage and prevent the illegal disposal of waste materials.

There are many ways to effectively tackle dumping, as the same person may or may not dispose of waste materials illegally depending upon the situation and motivational factors including: convenience, cost, perceived consequences, community values and knowledge.

To tackle each of these factors requires a campaign comprising each of the objectives outlined by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection in their Illegal Dumping Handbook for local governments:

1. Increase the effort required to illegally dump by making access to hotspots difficult, using structural approaches such as barriers, landscaping and lighting
2. Increase the risk of getting caught
 - a. Increase legitimate usage of the area
 - b. Carry out periodic, high-profile compliance campaigns
 - c. Publicise successful detections and prosecutions as widely as possible
3. Reduce the rewards/financial incentives to illegally dump
 - a. Provide and/or promote free or subsidised waste services
 - b. Issue fines to offenders
 - c. Require offenders to clean up
4. Reduce provocations: don't give reasons for people to dump.
 - a. Provide efficient and well-communicated waste services
 - b. Ensure reasonable waste service costs where possible
 - c. Foster community pride by enhancing the area's aesthetic appeal and increase the sense of ownership
 - d. Keep areas free of illegally dumped material
5. Reduce excuses not to dispose legally. Educate and inform the community
 - a. Publicise waste services
 - b. Carry out education programs outlining responsibilities
 - c. Install signs at hotspots with illegal dumping prevention messages

PROPOSAL

The Illegal Dumping Strategy proposes targeting these objectives by strengthening internal Council processes and intra-organisational cooperation, and formalising activities in the program areas of:

1. Prevention: Reduce the amount of illegal dumping incidents in the Douglas region
2. Compliance: Investigate and prosecute illegal dumpers
3. Engage and educate the community about
 - a. the impacts of illegal dumping
 - b. how everyone can report/stop illegal dumping
 - c. legal waste disposal options and responsibilities
4. Monitor, review and evaluate: To ensure an evidence-based, effective and flexible illegal dumping response

And recommends a consistent incident investigation process to enhance public awareness and involvement in the prevention and reporting of illegal dumping:

1. Report of illegal dumping logged with CRM or discovered by Council crews.
2. Council officer documents and, where possible, collects evidence of source of waste.

3. Dumped material, where practicable, sectioned off with yellow 'crime scene' tape and stickered/signed to indicate 'illegal dumping under investigation'
4. An information letter to be distributed to surrounding properties to alert residents that illegal dumping is under investigation and requesting anyone with information to contact Council.
5. Council officers return after 3 days:
 - a. If offender can be identified a letter is issued to remove the waste or an infringement notice is issued.
 - b. If the waste has not been removed and an offender cannot be identified, Council will remove the waste.
6. All incidents will be recorded in Council's database.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The financial ramifications of implementing this strategy should be minimal and encompassed in normal departmental budget allocations.

Extra resources required, in the form of officer time, should be concentrated in the process development phase, as well as nominal additional time required for investigation and clean-up of new incident sites.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Nil risk management implications ancillary to current requirements.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: There are numerous economic benefits to be derived from reducing the number of incidents and impacts of illegal dumping in the region. It is currently estimated that cleaning up illegal dumping costs Council over \$55,000 each year as well as potential costs to residents in reduction of land values and to businesses in reduction of visitor enjoyment of public spaces.

Environmental: Illegal dumping causes injury and death to birds, marine and terrestrial wildlife as it is mistaken for food or causes entanglement. It degrades habitats leading to the destruction of local biodiversity and preventing revegetation. Illegal dumping contaminates soil and water sources, increases susceptibility to flooding and erosion by altering drainage, harbours parasites, vermin, snakes and mosquitos as well as spreads weeds and noxious plant species. Reducing the amount of illegal dumping should see a resultant decrease in these environmental risk factors.

Social: The social impacts of illegal dumping can include: a reduction of amenity leading to reduced visits by locals and tourists, a decrease in community pride, increased crime rates and decrease in perceptions of safety as a space which looks uncared-for attracts antisocial and illegal behaviour, and the risk of physical injury through sharp or unsanitary objects.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 3 - Improve Environmental Performance

3.1.4 - Promote a culture within our communities of “zero tolerance to littering” and introduce an educational, regulatory and enforcement regime to underpin it.

Theme 4 - Engage, Plan, Partner

4.1.1 - Explore and utilise a comprehensive variety of media, including digital, to inform, engage and educate.

Operational Plan 2015-2016 Actions:

CEO6 - Develop and implement an Illegal Dumping Strategy.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Asset-Owner Meeting the responsibilities associated with owning or being the custodian of assets such as infrastructure.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Broad consultation was undertaken in the development of the strategy, with:

- Abbey Belcher, Technical Officer Resource Management
- Kelly Morris, Field Officer Resource Management
- Enzo Picerni, Team Leader Environmental Health & Regulatory Services
- Local Laws Officers, Environmental Health & Regulatory Services
- Peter Logan, Coordinator Public Spaces
- Kim Armbrust, Coordinator Civil Works

External: The strategy was developed with reference to:

- Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. Illegal Dumping Handbook. A Guide for Local Government.
- Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. Queensland's Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Due to the operational nature of the Illegal Dumping Strategy, consulting the community on the actions in the strategy would not add any value. This proposal will fall within the 'inform' category of Council's Community Engagement Framework.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Draft Douglas Shire Council Illegal Dumping Strategy 2016

2016

DRAFT Douglas Shire Council Illegal Dumping Strategy



LGolding



1 February 2016

- Convenience: it can take more effort to do the right thing than to dump waste illegally.
 - People are less likely to drop litter if there is an appropriate receptacle nearby.
 - Timing of rubbish collection services does not always correspond with a resident's moving/clean-up date.
 - People living in multi-unit dwellings with little storage space and often inadequate waste/recycling management systems.
- Cost
 - Businesses (construction) and individuals (moving house) generating large amounts of waste can make substantial savings from illegal dumping.
- Consequences: the perception and actual risk of getting caught and punished is low.
 - 88% of respondents to a 2015 survey of DSC residents believe it is "not very likely" or "not at all likely" that illegal dumpers will be caught or fined.⁴
 - 96% of respondents were certain they knew no one who had been caught
- Social norms and community values
 - People will dump rubbish where other people have dumped rubbish or where 'someone else will clean it up'
 - Transient residents may lack a sense of connection to their community
 - People are more concerned about the judgement of others than the behaviour itself. Litterers know the behaviour is not acceptable and will not dump rubbish where witnesses are likely.
 - Perception that the responsibility lies with others to provide bins and clean up
- Knowledge and awareness
 - Lack of awareness of impact, e.g.
 - On the environment of green waste or cigarette butts
 - On clean-up services of leaving rubbish next to a public bin or charity box

⁴ #456353 Love Where You Live litter and illegal dumping surveys and feedback

⁵ #456353 Love Where You Live litter and illegal dumping surveys and feedback

