

Illegal Dumping in Western Australia: Strategies for Change



Amy Warner
for the
Metropolitan Illegal Dumping
Taskforce

What is illegal dumping?

Illegal dumping, the disposal of waste in area that is not a designated waste disposal facility generally occurs where offenders can safely dump waste without being caught:

- in remote areas: eg. Darling Range, regional bush reserves, outskirts of towns.
- Usually occurs at night time and on weekends

Illegal Dumping is a significant component of the overall litter problem in WA, with cleanup costs becoming an increasing financial burden for Local Government Authorities and Government Agencies eg. CALM, Water Corp

What is being illegally dumped?

- Abandoned and stolen cars
- Household and domestic waste
- Green waste and other garden waste
- White goods and furniture
- Motor vehicles tyres
- Construction and demolition waste
- Industrial waste (hazardous)
- Oil and other liquid waste (hazardous)
- Asbestos (hazardous)
- Medicinal waste (hazardous)

Who is dumping waste illegally?

3 Main Groups

1. Householders dumping domestic waste
2. Commercial Operators dumping green waste, construction and development, industrial waste.
3. Persons dumping vehicles- stolen and/or 'bush bashing'



Department of
Environment







Department of Environment





Department of Environment



Why is illegal dumping increasing?

1. Increased landfill charges
1970's free → today ~\$40/ tonne
2. Reduced access to disposal facilities
Increasing population, no new landfill facilities.
3. Community Attitudes
 - apathy & laziness
 - lack of community pride & responsibility
4. Lack of Enforcement
 - remote areas, difficult to enforce.
 - low rate of enforcement for general littering.

Impacts of illegal dumping

1. Social Costs

Dumping causes more dumping; reduced visual amenity and recreation value; health risks to people working in and using the bush

2. Financial Costs

High cost of removing waste; cost of infrastructure to manage illegal activities; cost to residents in decreases land prices close to dumping sites

3. Environmental Costs

Contamination of ground water & drinking water catchment; spread of weeds from green waste; increased fire risk

Difficulties in dealing with Illegal Dumping

1. Insufficient knowledge of the phenomenon.
Exactly who, what, when, where, how much
2. Weak Legislation
Discourages enforcement, not a deterrent
3. Logistics of Enforcement
Large area, insufficient resources.
4. Number of stakeholders involved
Requires an integrated strategy; the 'cockroach effect'

Darling Range Rubbish Group (DRRG)

- DRRG formed in 2000 by representatives of CALM; the Water Corporation; Shire of Mundaring; Shire of Kalamunda; City of Gosnells; City of Armadale and the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale.
- Formed to address the increasing rate of illegal dumping in the 'hills' area on the eastern boundary of the Perth Metropolitan Area (~ 400,000 hectares) -illegal dumping increased significantly, doubling from 1998-2000.
- CALM Rangers have estimated ~250 tonnes of rubbish is dumped annually in CALM areas of State Forest in the Darling Range & recorded a 4-fold increase in the cost of rubbish removal from 1995-2000

Metropolitan Illegal Dumping Taskforce: Business Plan

- Commissioned by the Darling Range Rubbish Group
- Developed by Alexis Anderson (DoE)

Aim: To develop a management program that will significantly reduce the amount of illegally dumped rubbish in Western Australia

MIDT Business Plan

Objectives

- Ensure that illegal rubbish dumping is significantly reduced
- Reduce the cost of clean up of illegally dumped materials
- Divert illegally dumped materials to proper waste disposal facilities
- Protect Perth's water catchment areas from pollution
- Develop Community awareness about the environmental, social and economic impacts of illegal dumping
- Reduce the spread of weeds in native bush areas.
- Develop a coordinated approach to cleanups of illegal dumping sites

Define and quantify the problems & outcomes

- Develop a database to collect relevant data
- Training information collectors to gain consistency of data
- Establish centralised information gathering
- Consistent and regular evaluation

Gain Commitment of Stakeholders

Key Stakeholders

- Local Government Authorities
- Water Corporation
- Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM)
- Department of Environment
- Keep Australia Beautiful Council
- Main Roads WA
- Waste Management Advisory Board
- Community Groups
- Residents

Behavioural Change

- Develop more effective ***Extended Producer Responsibility*** mechanisms
 - take back schemes & levies eg. batteries, tyres, white goods
 - regulation of production through industry encouragement, cooperation and legislation
- **Physical Intervention**
 - prevent and deter access eg. fencing, video surveillance
 - improved facilitation of waste disposal eg. increased verge collections
 - market development of recycling and resource recovery for construction & demolition wastes, green waste, tyres
 - continued clean up of sites

Education

- Government
- Industry
- NGO's
- Community
 - foster individual responsibility within community education
 - increase awareness of penalties
 - promotion through fostering events eg. WA Tidy Towns
 - 'dob in a dumper' programs
 - State & Local Govt education programs
 - Education & training of government employees

Broaden and Strengthen legislative powers

Current legislation does not provide an adequate deterrent to illegal dumping in WA, nor does it support the efforts of Enforcement Officers to implement the law. Changes to legislation needed are:

- WA Litter Act (1979)
 - states “any person”. Need to define person as including companies
 - need to create a legal distinction between illegal dumping and littering
 - to allow enforcement officers to serve summons outside of their jurisdiction

Broaden and Strengthen legislative powers

- Need to create legislation against illegal land-filling
- On-the-spot fine increases. *\$50 → \$200 December 2003*
- Greater powers to enforcement officers
- Multi-jurisdictional Authority

Recommendation: *Development of Legislation similar to NSW
Protection of Environmental Operations Act (1997)*