



TWEED
SHIRE COUNCIL

Illegal Dumping Strategy

2019-2021



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1 Definitions illegal dumping and litter

Litter is generally small amounts of waste discarded onto private land, public land or waters that does not exceed one small bag full.

Littering occurs instantaneously as items are thrown or dropped, left where consumed or tossed from a vehicle.

Aggravated littering is more serious as it is likely to cause or contribute to danger or harm to persons, animals, premises or property, for example, intentionally smashing glass or flicking a cigarette butt from a car that could start a fire.

Examples of litter:

- throwing food wrappers or cigarette butts from a vehicle
- leaving a food container under a park bench
- stubbing a cigarette onto a footpath
- tossing an apple core into a garden bed
- allowing soil, sand or garden waste to blow from a moving vehicle
- advertising material that is deposited, in a public place or open private place other than in a mail box and that can easily end up as litter. An example is any material placed under a windscreen on a vehicle.



Illegal dumping is usually more than a bag full or household, commercial or green waste that is deliberately taken to another public or private place to be disposed of rather than to pay to dispose of the waste at a landfill or use existing waste collection facilities.

Examples of illegal dumping include:

- placing unwanted household items on the footpath without booking a council collection, or adding to another property's household clean-up pile without their consent
- dumping household, commercial or green waste or even sheets of fibro containing asbestos in the bush, or on the side of a road
- businesses or contractors who are paid to correctly dispose of commercial waste but instead dump it on land without proper approvals

Note – RID Online requires we record illegally dumped 'household waste'.

We would record household waste as illegal dumping when the amount dumped exceeds one small bag of household rubbish.

2 Executive Summary - How Council defines illegal dumping

This Strategy is focussing on illegal dumping where more than a bag full or household, commercial or green waste is deliberately taken to another public or private place to be disposed of rather than pay to dispose at a landfill or use existing waste collection facilities.

This deliberate dumping of material in a place is illegal, irresponsible and costly to collect.

This focus of this strategy is to collect dumped material safely and efficiently, to work with the community to change the behaviour of the small number of dumpers.

Examples of illegal dumping that may be considered deliberate include:

- dumping in bushland
- dumping of waste in reserves, parks, vacant lots and carparks
- dumping of waste on rural roadside

Note: sometimes people dump items on the kerbside without booking it in for a collection. This will be dealt with as part of the existing kerbside collection, although fines may apply.



3 Introduction

People are illegally dumping waste in our bushland, along our coastlines, in wetlands, along roadsides and over the back fence. The majority of us do the right thing, however a minority are going to great lengths to hide their anti-social behaviour – even breaking locks on gates installed to prevent this at some dumping hotspots.

Illegal dumping costs us all in big ways with environmental, social and financial costs to the community. For example, areas where waste has been dumped attract more dumping, crime and antisocial behaviour, looks horrible and risks leeching toxic pollution into our environment.

People are dumping waste, from asbestos, chemicals, paint, car bodies, domestic rubbish, furniture, construction and demolition materials and garden waste. These are all things that can be disposed of properly at the local waste facility - some for free.

Illegal dumping is quite literally a growing problem, as when one person dumps waste, others add to the pile. Through their laziness, a minority of people and businesses are impacting everyone else who has a right to a clean, safe place to live, work and play.

Tweed Shire Council (TSC) aims to bring about long lasting behaviour change in illegal dumping behaviour through a shire wide behaviour change program. In addition to the shire wide behaviour change program, two hotspots have been chosen to increase environmental protection and improvements in environmentally sensitive areas.

The \$20,000 Baseline Data Collection grant received from the Environmental Protection Agency in May 2018 is helping to establish very strong data on the types and quantity of waste being dumped.

Council will have about 12 months of data by the end of the grant period in June 2019. Based on the data Council already collects, we have a good idea of the types and locations of dumping and can establish trends in behaviour, however increased data collection will additional detail that will help Council understand and tackle the illegal dumping problem.



4 Objectives

4.1 Primary objectives

There are five primary objectives of the Strategy:

- **Behaviour change** in the community resulting in increased community ownership, including increased reporting and shaming of illegal dumping
- **A sustained reduction in dumping** shire-wide, with a particular focus on bushland and rural roadside hotspots
- **Improved data collection** and reporting on dumping incidents in line with the Environmental Protection Authority's RID Online database requirements
- **Increased Council compliance action** and use of surveillance equipment. Evidence of the individual or business responsible may be gathered and large fines apply.
- **Demonstrated increase in knowledge of the environmental and social impacts** of illegal dumping through an education program.

4.2 Secondary objectives

- Increase public awareness of council waste services
- Promote Council's green waste program through the new green bin system
- Raise the profile of Landcare and Dunecare groups in the shire and their role in environmental protection and restoration
- Leverage the Environmental Protection Agency's Dob In a Dumper program.



5 Strategy Scope - the impacts of illegal dumping are huge

Council is committed to substantially reduce the illegal dumping in the Tweed Shire.

The types of things being illegally dumped include; general domestic and commercial rubbish, asbestos sheeting, oils and paint, building materials, tyres and garden waste.

Council staff patrol dumping hotspots like the Coastal foreshore twice a week and collect the illegally dumped waste. Unfortunately there is always something to pick up.

Waste dumped more remotely may not be discovered for some time and can degrade/leak or be added to by others creating environmental issues and a bigger problem to clean up.

Some of the specific risks include:

5.1 Financial costs

All ratepayers end up paying for the illegal dumping by the few. It cost Council \$84,000 in 2016/17, plus the costs of remediation and installing barriers to prevent dumping. As we continue to collect more data, we are likely to find the financial cost is a lot more.

Dumping also results in lost resources through materials which could be recycled or composted. Properties nearby to dumping sites suffer decreased property values.

5.2 Human Health Risks

The human health risk of illegal dumping is very real with Council staff being called on to clean up dangerous waste on a daily basis, as well as the risk to people stumbling across dumped waste, or swimming in waterways contaminated with pollution leeching from waste.

Bushcare and Landcare volunteers regularly encounter illegally dumped waste during their regeneration efforts. Dumped waste may harbour vermin, snakes and mosquitoes.

5.3 Impacts to neighbourhood safety

The cost to society, both locals and visitors, is huge. Dumped waste gives a bad impression of the area, impacting our local businesses and neighbourhood safety. Research shows that dumped waste attracts crime and anti-social behaviour.

5.4 Environmental impacts

Illegal dumping impacts our environment as materials degrade or toxic substances leak into our environment, impacting our waterways, flora, fauna and soil.

Illegal dumping of green waste also spreads weeds that smother our natives and increases the risk of bushfire to properties close-by.

The Tweed Shire is the third most bio-diverse region in Australia, with many of our plants and animals not being found anywhere else. It is worth looking after as well as we can.

6 Understanding Illegal Dumping

6.1 Illegal Dumping in the Tweed Shire

For the 2016/17 period it was estimated that Council spent \$84,000 on illegal dumping incidents, with coastal foreshore hotspots accounting for the largest portion of this cost.

This data has influenced the choice of pilot 'hotspot' areas. These areas will be subject to increased surveillance and installation of signage.

6.2 The pilot 'hotspot' areas

In addition to the cost, the environmental pollution impacts of illegal dumping on the coastal foreshore and at urban/bushland interfaces are a major driver for Council pursuing behaviour change in the community.

The hotspots have been chosen to have dual benefits of behaviour change and increased environmental protection and improvement in environmentally sensitive areas.

Pilot Hotspot 1 - Wooyung Road and Tweed Coast Road (Coastal Foreshore)

Coastal foreshore Illegal dumping data for 2016/17 shows that foreshore dumping is the largest illegal dumping cost for Council at 37.5% of costs at around \$31,000 per year. Hotspot 1 is estimated to cost Council half of these costs at around \$15,000 a year.

Illegally dumped waste is collected Monday and Friday every week along the foreshore by a team of council staff. There is consistent dumping of a large variety of materials in this area.

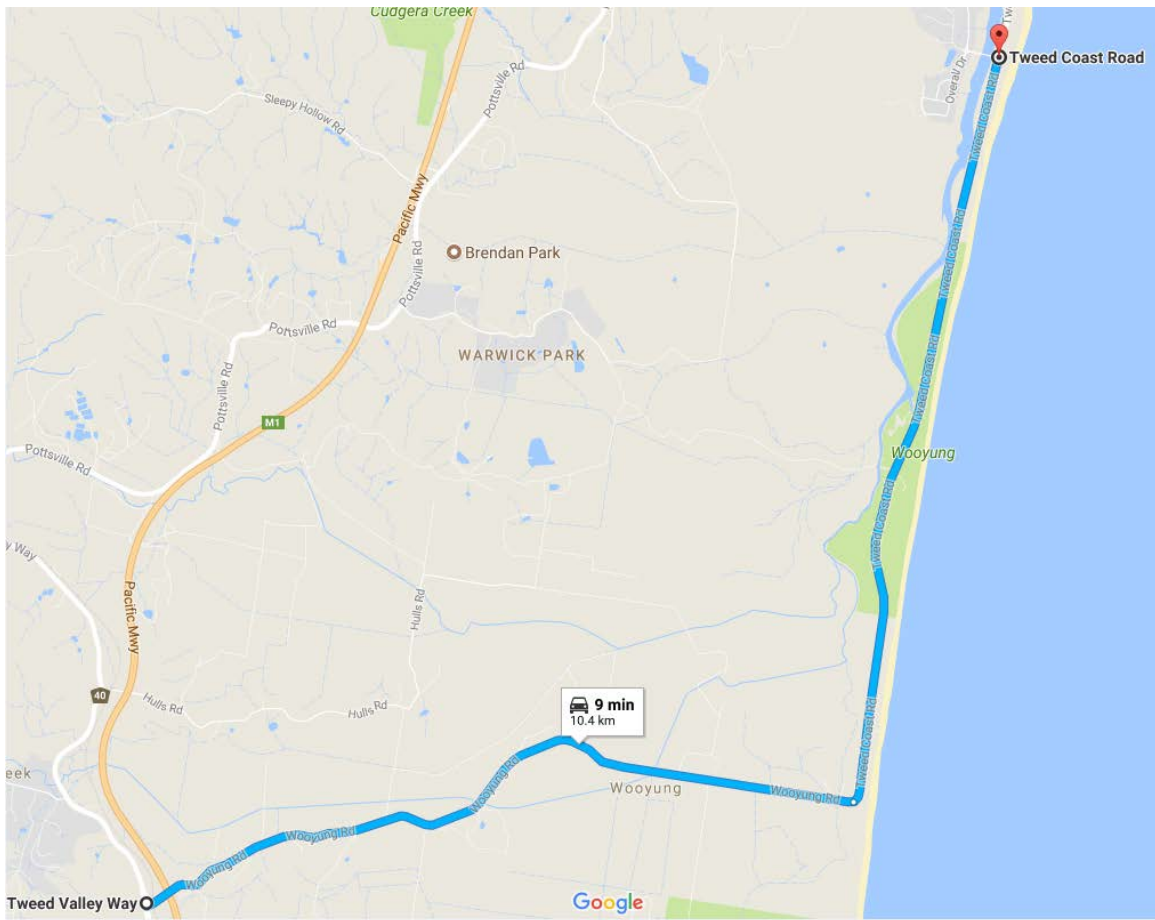
Hotspot 1 covers 10.4 km from the entrance to Wooyung Road at the Tweed Valley Way and along the Tweed Coast Road to the bridge to Pottsville (see map 1) and includes the Wooyung and Pottsville townships. The Tweed Coast Road is bushland on either side with many car parks giving access to the beach. Dumping occurs in bushland and in car parks. It is generally a quiet road with cane farms on the Wooyung Road stretch from Tweed Valley way to the coastline and the use of video surveillance may be worthwhile to trial here.

The Tweed Coast has been identified as an area of high biodiversity. Kingston et al. (2004) assessed that 408 ha of high to very high and 456 ha of medium ecological status vegetation occurred within the 2 km wide coastal zone.

Vegetation communities include the Endangered Ecological Communities (EECs) Littoral Rainforest, Themeda Grasslands on coastal headlands, Swamp sclerophyll forests and Coastal Cypress Pine forest in conjunction with Banksia woodlands, heathlands and coastal wetlands all identified as disproportionately cleared and/or poorly reserved.

These communities contain or provide habitat for a range of State and Commonwealth listed threatened fauna (15+) and flora (20+) species. Council has invested considerable funding in the restoration and enhancement of these areas over the past 20 years.

Map 1 – Hotspot 1 – Wooyung Road and Tweed Coast Road (coastal foreshore)



Hotspot 2 - Pottsville wetlands bushland/urban interface

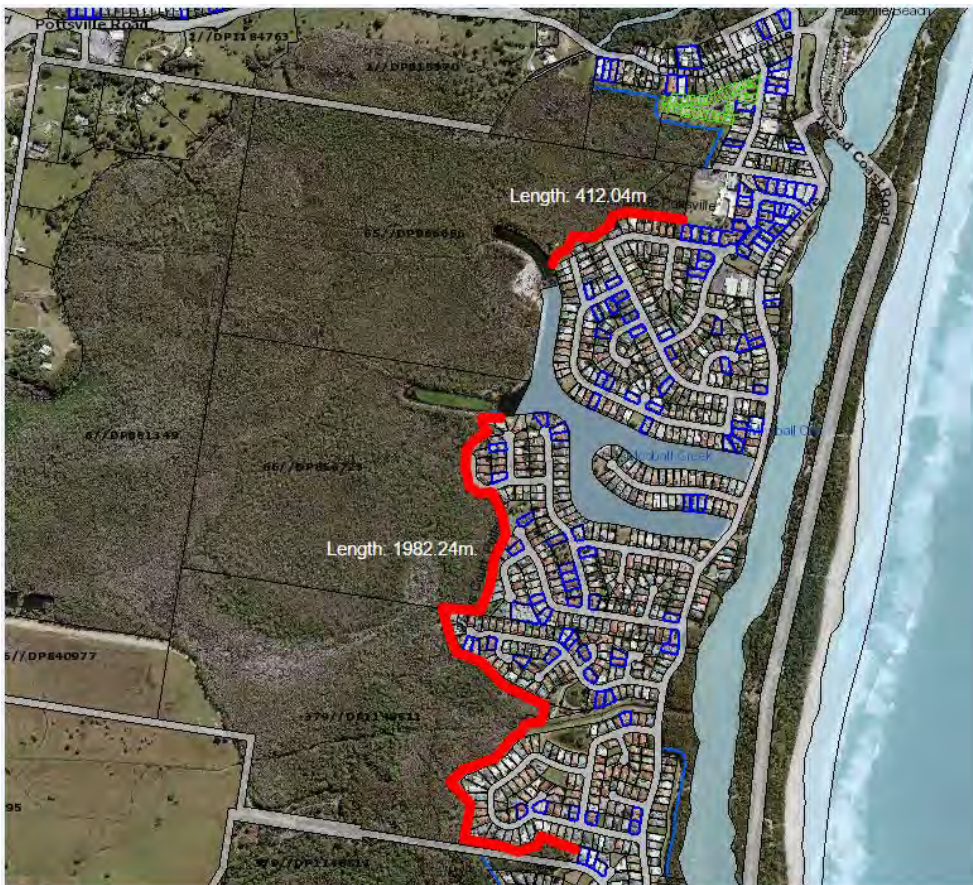
The Pottsville wetlands bushland/urban interface area is Hotspot 2. The hotspot area is about 2.4 km long with residential homes backing onto the bushland area. The types of materials dumped include green waste and household items (often from these homes).

Council managed Pottsville wetlands are within the proposed coastal foreshore pilot area and has been the focus of illegal dumping programs in the past, with Natural Resource Management Unit spending \$4000 on clean ups and preventative measures such as letters to residents urging them to change their behaviour.

Pottsville Wetland is a unique environmental asset that provides critical habitat for the declining Tweed Coast koala population. Endangered Ecological Communities mapped within the wetlands include; Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest (81.7ha), Swamp Sclerophyll Forest (150.1ha) and Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest (3.8 ha), just over 80% of the wetland area.

These communities support a range of threatened species of fauna including the Koala, Wallum Froglet, Bush-stone Curlew, Black Bittern, Eastern Osprey, Grey-headed Flying Fox, Glossy-black Cockatoo, Pale-vented Bush-hen, Common Blossom Bat and Common Planigale and the flora species Stinking Cryptocarya, White Laceflower, Pink Nodding Orchid & Swamp Orchid.

Map 2 – Hotspot 2 – Pottsville Wetlands



7 Recommended Investigation Process

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:
 - a) Photos, notes including time, date, location, description and volume in case further enforcement action required.
3. Dumped material sectioned off with yellow 'Illegal Dumping' tape (see cover off strategy) and stickered/signed to indicate 'illegal dumping under investigation':
 - a) Unless rubbish is an immediate danger to public health and safety, it should be left for 3 days to alert the public that Council is investigating and takes illegal dumping seriously.
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.

8 Barriers and drivers contributing to illegal dumping

The Environmental Protection Agency states that depending on the type and quantity of waste, illegal dumpers are motivated by:

- convenience
- the opportunity to make money
- an unwillingness to pay
- an uncaring attitude.

From EPA research and community feedback, we believe some barriers and drivers are:

- distance to Stotts Creek Recovery Centre for some residents and businesses
- lack of understanding of the environmental and social impacts of dumping
- perception that illegal dumping is a social norm and acceptable to an extent
- perception that impacts are low as Council will pick up waste
- lack of perceived likelihood of being caught and the desire to avoid disposal costs (e.g. dumping in isolated bushland).

Barriers to and drivers of illegal dumping as well as ways to overcome these, will be explored in community workshops, surveys as the illegal dumping program develops.

9. Strategy actions to combat illegal dumping

The actions are expected to have the following outcomes:

- Increased community ownership of the illegal dumping as an important issue where illegal dumping behaviour is shamed
- Reduced perception of dumping as being acceptable (that it is not the 'social norm')
- Increased knowledge of the environmental and social impacts of illegal dumping through an education program
- Increased businesses' concern for their reputation leading to decreased dumping
- Increased perceived likelihood of being caught
- Increased reporting of illegal dumping
- Increased understanding of personal consequences if caught
- Improvement in environment at Bushland and coastal foreshore sites– less invasive species in bushland due to reduced green waste dumping and reduced pollution
- Improved data collection through meeting EPA's RID Online reporting requirements
- Improved links with North East Waste, Byron Shire and Gold Coast Councils.

Summary of actions

Improve data and reporting

1. Enter data into RID Online
2. Online survey/engagement sent to residents through Tweed Link and Social Media asking people why they think a small proportion of people dump and ways to stop illegal dumping.

Behaviour change and education program

3. Develop an online location based dashboard of recent illegal dumping incidents using data that will also be entered into RIDonline. This action is seeking increased community ownership of the illegal dumping issue, including dobbing in a dumper. Aiming to increase the perceived risk of getting caught.
4. Community group workshops to identify barriers to change for the shire and develop messaging for pilot signage (in addition to EPA branded RID Online signage), social media and promotional materials.

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5. Develop behaviour change education materials based on community workshops and distribute to Tweed Shire, as well as through the NE Waste network to other shires, as appropriate.
 6. Advertising successful prosecutions and the penalties involved increases the perceived risk of getting caught and the seriousness of the consequences.
 7. Pilot community developed behaviour change signage, and EPA branded signage, on the Tweed coastal foreshore strip along Wooyung Road and Tweed Coast Road.
 8. Media program across social media, newspapers and radio to encourage people to report dumping on RIDonline, participate in interactive map and survey, as well as report information about who may be an illegal dumping perpetrator to Council.
 9. Support Dunecare and Landcare groups to increase reporting of illegal dumping during their clean up days – provide them a reporting mechanism that collects data for RIDonline.
 10. Joint Council, Dunecare, Landcare and community illegal dumping clean up events across the shire with media coverage.
 11. Pilot letters with behaviour change messaging to residents at Hotspot 2 – Pottsville wetlands.
 12. Educate householders to request evidence of legal disposal from waste removal contractors used.
 13. Liaise with industries involved in disposing of commercial amounts of green waste, building and construction waste to ensure they are aware of their legal requirements, impacts of illegal dumping and barriers to appropriate waste disposal options.
 14. Rehabilitate and remediate dumping sites in hotspot areas where Environment Trust Funds are available.

Increase Council's capacity to respond quickly to illegal dumping

15. Equip the Environmental Compliance Officers from the Environmental Health team to be able to pick up illegally dumped household problem wastes (oil, small quantities of fibro potentially containing asbestos and tyres). Officers will be trained in WHS procedures and appropriately equipped to pick up illegally dumped waste up to 1 cubic metre for disposal at Stott's Creek Landfill. This will help Council to respond to smaller illegal dumps more quickly.
16. Trial the use of our waste contractor to collect piles of waste deposited on roads and footpaths as part of the kerbside collection program. This illegally dumped waste is to be photographed, recorded on RIDonline and billed to the Illegal Dumping project.

Compliance

17. Rapid response to illegally dumped waste – unless an immediate threat to the public or environment, the waste will be wrapped in ‘Illegal Dumping under investigation’ tape and left for 3 days before pick up to alert the public that Council is investigating the incident and takes illegal dumping seriously.
18. Introduce a standardised process for illegal dumping responses and investigations to ensure all incidents are handled in a timely and ‘best practise’ manner [see ‘Recommended Investigation Process’ below].
19. Explore the effectiveness of electronic surveillance, name and shame initiatives and heavy fines used as a deterrent to illegal dumping.
20. Reinforce the consequences of offending by prosecuting offenders - require offenders clean up illegal dumping sites and/or fines may be issued.

Monitoring and Evaluation

21. Develop a detailed incident database that aligns with EPA’s RID Online Requirements of the extent and nature of illegal dumping within the Tweed LGA. Ensure details of every incident of illegal dumping i.e. location, date, materials and volume, is recorded before clean-up commences, particularly of incidents not otherwise recorded.
22. Run regular reports on the cost numbers describing clean-ups of illegal dumping to better determine costs of clean-ups.
23. Regularly review collated data and report on this to track trends in illegal dumping and the impact of intervention efforts.

10. Conclusion

Illegal Dumping is an issue that impacts the whole community.

This Illegal Dumping Strategy lays the framework to significantly reduce the amount and impacts of dumped waste in our highly valued Tweed Shire environment.

The strategy actions range from targeted and positive behaviour change initiatives, to increased community reporting to greater video surveillance and compliance action.

Processes and strategic actions will be implemented, reviewed and modified over time.



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