



Illegal Dumping

Thousands of large rubbish items are removed from our environment each year by Clean Up Australia Day volunteers. Illegally dumped rubbish is not only ugly, it also leaks contaminants into our soil, waterways and natural habitats.

The Problem

What is Illegal Dumping?

Illegal dumping is classified as the dumping of waste larger than litter in public and private areas such as roadsides, illegal landfills or water, without Council or EPA approvals.

These large waste items include general household rubbish (from supermarket bag size upwards), larger domestic items (e.g. mattresses), green waste, construction materials, hazardous waste and abandoned vehicles and tyres.

What are the impacts of dumping?

The environmental impacts of illegal dumping are significant. Dumped rubbish can degrade our bushland, reducing its biodiversity value and degrading plant and animal habitats and hampering revegetation.

The dumping of green waste spreads seeds, the increased nutrients in the soil promotes the spread of weeds and invasive plant species. The long term effects can be detrimental to the ecosystem. A dumping site can become a breeding ground for vermin, which in turn poses a health risk.

Run off from dump sites may contain toxic materials which contaminate soil and water sources such as lakes, creeks and drinking water supplies. Dumped items can also create fire hazards and also flooding.

When large items are illegally dumped, this is also a loss of natural resource as many items could have been recycled, such as fridges and e-waste.

Illegal dumping can also have an ugly impact on our environment, deterring people from visiting areas which have become illegal dumping hot-spots. It attracts more illegal dumping which further exacerbates the problem.

How much does dumping cost Australia?

There are also major financial impacts. In 2006/2007 it was reported that councils in South Australia were estimated to have spent \$1.5 million on cleaning up illegal dumping. For larger councils, this can be as much as \$350,000 a year.¹

According to NSW EPA, the clean-up costs in NSW generally comprised of 51% of local councils total expenditure while enforcement took up to 39%. In comparison, education comprised of 6% of total expenditure.²



What are the laws relating to illegal dumping?

Legislation relating to illegal dumping and the protection of the environment varies from state to state. For example, in Victoria, the Environment Protection Act 1970 offers penalties for polluting the land through littering which includes illegal dumping.³

In May 2014, the NSW Government announced significant increases for penalty notice amounts for illegal dumping under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (the POEO Act). The increased [penalty notice amounts](#) are now the toughest penalty in Australia for this type of offence¹

Did you know?

- It is estimated that more than 11,000 tonnes of waste are illegally dumped each year in Western Sydney alone.⁴
- Illegal dumping represented the largest contribution to estimated litter volume per 1,000m² in South Australia and Victoria during 2012/13.⁵
- NSW councils spend around \$10 million each year responding to illegal dumping and illegal landfilling.⁴





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The Solution

What's being done about illegal dumping?

Many local councils around Australia have also adopted strategies to combat illegal dumping including community education, regular clean out days and regulatory enforcement. NSW Illegal Dumping Strategy 2014-16 is one such initiative which reflects the NSW Government's strong stance against illegal dumping.

Special task forces' have been set up around the country to tackle illegal waste activities. The Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) squad in NSW, the Illegal Dumping Unit (IDU) in SA, while in Victoria the EPA has allocated \$6 million towards the Illegal Dumping Strike Force (IDSF).

Fines for illegal dumping

In NSW:

- Fines of up to \$1 million or 7 years imprisonment for individuals who harm the environment through the Protection of the *Environment Operations Act 1997*.²

In WA:

- Fines of up to \$62,500 for individuals through the *Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 2010*.⁶

In QLD:

- The *Waste Reduction & Recycling Act 2011* enforces fines of up to \$117,800 for volumes over 2500L.⁷

In SA:

- Fines of up to \$500,000 or 4 years for individuals and up to \$2 million for a corporate body through the *Environment Protection Act 1993*.⁸

So what can I do?

Always make sure that you dispose of your rubbish responsibly and in an appropriate manner. This could either be through a council-organised clean out or your council may also collect on an on-call basis.

Also check with your local council as to where your nearest waste disposal facilities are. Your council may assist you by providing free tipping vouchers. Also visit Planet Ark's recycling website, www.recyclingnearyou.com.au to find out about recycling centres near you.

Your unwanted items may also be of interest to someone else. You could think about posting an advert on sites such as Gumtree or your local Freecycle group.

If you see an illegal dumping site, or see someone dumping rubbish, report it to your local council who will be able to investigate the matter further. Keep Australia Beautiful in WA have even introduced a Litter Report App.

The kind of information which they may require is:

- Street location of illegal dumping
- Types of dumped materials and whether you believe that this may be a hazard
- Date and time of dumping
- Name, addresses and car registration (if applicable) of people responsible
- Photograph of the incident which may assist in the prosecution

Once reported, make sure that you do not disturb the site, as you may be harming evidence which could be used in court. There may also be harmful materials within the dumping site, such as needles, asbestos, toxic items or other hazardous materials.⁹

References

1. Local Government Association of South Australia
[Illegal Dumping Toolkit](#)
2. The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
[NSW Illegal Dumping Strategy 2014-2016](#)
3. VIC Environment Protection Authority
[Environment Protection Act 1970](#)
- 4 [NSW Crackdown on Illegal Dumping Handbook](#)
5. [Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index 2012-13](#)
6. WA Keep Australia Beautiful
[Litter Laws](#)
7. QLD Department of Environment and Resource Management
[What are the fines?](#)
8. SA Environment Protection Agency
[Illegal Dumping fines](#)
9. QLD Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
[Report It](#)

