

Preventing illegal dumping at unit blocks

Project details:

Duration

EPA Grant: July 2014–
June 2015

Council & RID Squad
Program: Oct 2015–
May 2016

Cost

\$62,460 plus in-kind
contributions

Approaches used

- Education and awareness
- Enforcement
- Easier disposal Signage

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In 2014–15, four methods of preventing illegal dumping at unit blocks were identified, with funding from the EPA's *Combatting Illegal Dumping: Clean-up & Prevention Program*

What was the problem?

The former Bankstown City Council identified four areas of high density unit blocks as hotspots for illegal dumping. These areas experienced 147 dumping incidents over a three-month period with sometimes daily incidents recorded ranging from single items to large piles.

What did we do?

Asked people to report dumping with positive messaging

In September 2014, a flyer and a fridge magnet explaining how to report illegal dumping were mailed with a cover letter to 248 homes. Additional signage was placed in the bin areas of unit blocks telling people how to report. Inspections were conducted twice a week and the number of incidents recorded.

In February 2015, door hangers using the same messaging about reporting illegal dumping were hung on the individual front doors of the same 248 units.

Created positive messaging with rewards for reporting

In September 2014, a flyer was mailed to 461 homes explaining how to report dumping with a reward offered if the information led to the offender being identified and fined.

In February 2015, door hangers using the same information were hung on the individual front doors of the same 461 units.

Offered free tip vouchers

Between March and May 2015, 470 homes were mailed a free tip voucher. This meant they could dispose of bulky household waste free at any time within three months at the nearby waste facility.

Project features:

How effectiveness and results were evaluated

We compared the number of dumping incidents before and after each type of intervention to assess effectiveness.

What was the result?

- Operation Jacob was the most effective way to stop dumping with 100% decrease in incidents in the first 10 days.
- Offering residents a free clean up service or free disposal at a waste facility did not reduce dumping.
- Asking residents to report dumping did not result in more reports but did appear to deter offenders fearful of being reported.
- Door hangers and postcards delivered under doors were much more effective than mailing information. Door hangers and postcards resulted in a 60% decrease in dumping, compared to mail outs.

Offered free, quick and easy collection services

Between March and May 2015, 777 homes were mailed a flyer offering a free 'move out collection service'. The service offered collection of waste within 48 hours, instead of the usual two-week wait, and let residents book a collection for an individual unit instead of the whole block as usually required.

The results of these four trials were evaluated and the next phase was developed as an internal program working with support from the Sydney Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) Squad.



Figure 1 Illegally dumped waste taped and sign posted 19 November 2015



Figure 2 4 days later, 23 November 2015 waste is removed by resident

Operation Jacob

Named after the street in which these trials were first conducted, Jacob Street, Bankstown a communication and enforcement program was developed. The trial focused on one unit block that had experienced weekly dumping incidents.

The program had four components:

- Postcards using the words 'no', 'illegal' and 'wrong thing' emphasised that dumping outside unit blocks is unlawful. The postcards also explained how to book a collection service. Postcards were delivered under the door of every unit within the complex.
- When a dumping incident occurred (monitored by daily inspections), the RID Officer taped off the waste with investigation tape and placed a sign in the waste saying it was illegally dumped and asking for information.
- At the same time as taping off the waste, the RID Officer put another postcard under each unit's front door appealing for information about who had dumped the waste.
- The taped-off waste was left at the site until the investigation was complete (or until the waste was removed by the offender) before being cleaned up.



Figure 3 Initial Operation Jacob postcards put under doors.



Figure 4 Initial Operation Jacob postcards put under doors.



Figure 5 Operation Jacob postcard to follow up after dumping has occurred.

What was the result?

Asking people to report dumping

In a two-month period, one person called to report an incident. No rewards were given as the information wasn't valuable.

In September 2014 when only direct mail outs were used, 27 incidents occurred. This represents no significant change in rates of dumping to what was regularly observed.

In February when the same information was delivered via door hangers, 11 incidents occurred. Representing a 60% decrease in dumping compared to the mail outs in September.

Free tip vouchers

Only five tip vouchers were redeemed, representing a 1% uptake.

During this time there were 61 incidents, representing no significant change compared to regular observations before the trial.

Free, quick and easy collection services

Eight collections were booked representing a 1% uptake.

During this time there were 59 incidents, representing no significant change compared to regular observations before the trial.

Operation Jacob

After the first education postcards were delivered there were no incidents for 10 days.

When the first incident occurred, it was taped off, a sign was placed on the waste and investigation postcards were put under all front doors in the block. When the RID Officer returned three days later, a resident had removed the waste.

What did we learn?

Offering residents cheaper and easier ways to dispose of waste does not result in less dumping around unit blocks.

Using door hangers and postcards to ask people to report dumping appears to deter dumpers.

Asking people to report dumping or offering rewards for information does not increase reporting.

Mailing out information does not appear to be an effective way of communicating with residents in this context.

Using imagery and clear, simple messaging is more effective than translating materials.

Translating materials in this context is not necessary. The former Bankstown City Council had identified that just because a person can speak a language doesn't mean they can read it. Translation confuses messages and makes material look cluttered. It can also segregate the community, making people from a particular language group feel targeted as offenders.

Legacy

Due to the success of Operation Jacob, Council extended the trial at three hotspots. Postcards were delivered under the front doors, signage was installed in bin areas and drive by inspections commenced for a month.

Instead of weekly incidents at these complexes, there was only one in four weeks.

Council then extended the trial to another three hotspot complexes. At the end of the month there were just three illegal dumping incidents. Before the trial, incidents had been happening on a weekly basis.

This process has been recommended to become standard practice for dumping hotspot unit complexes in the area.

Photos

Figure 1 - Illegally dumped waste taped and sign posted in Bankstown, 19 November 2015; Canterbury-Bankstown City Council.

Figure 2 - Four days later, waste is removed by resident in Bankstown, 23 November 2015; Canterbury-Bankstown City Council.

Figure 3 Operation Jacob initial postcards put under doors in Bankstown, 2015; Canterbury-Bankstown City Council.

Figure 4 Operation Jacob initial postcards put under doors in Bankstown, 2015; Canterbury-Bankstown City Council.

Figure 5 Operation Jacob postcard to follow up after dumping had occurred in Bankstown, 2015; Canterbury-Bankstown City Council.

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