



Multi-agency collaboration

Port Macquarie–Hastings Council collaborated with other government agencies to tackle illegal dumping in its local government area.

Project details

Duration

June 2017 to June 2019

Cost

\$147,460 plus in-kind contributions

Approaches used

- Collaboration with other government organisations
- Increased data collection and use of RIDonline
- Education and awareness
- Monitoring

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What was the problem?

Before the project, the council was collecting only community complaint data on illegal dumping. This meant it was grossly underestimating the illegal dumping problem in the local government area (LGA).

What did the council do?

The council received a grant under the NSW EPA's *Combatting Illegal Dumping Clean-up and Prevention Program* and used it for a program to combat illegal dumping. The program included improving data collection across the LGA and reporting from the field.

The baseline data collected suggested the need for collaboration between the council, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Forestry Corporation to tackle illegal dumping. A memorandum of understanding established the roles and responsibilities of the three agencies.

This project focused on two key illegal dumping issues:

- dumping in National Parks and council bushland reserves and on Forestry Corporation land
- illegal dumping of household bulky waste near government-owned rental properties.

During June and July 2017 council rangers patrolled council, NPWS and Forestry land, identified incidents of illegal dumping and recorded them in RIDonline. This established baseline data to use in the anti-dumping program.

Between July 2017 and June 2019 the council ran the program across National Parks, Forestry NSW and community housing estates. It used a multi-faceted approach of coordinated reporting, clean-up, education and infrastructure.

Data collection

The council used the RIDonline mapping function to identify dumping hotspots. The project's data collection process also provided accurate information about the locations, types and volumes of waste illegally dumped.

Clean-ups

The council cleaned up the hotspots in conjunction with the relevant public land managers. It engaged with Community Housing to address kerbside dumping at hotspot locations that body manages.

Infrastructure

Where appropriate, infrastructure such as RID-branded signage, gates and surveillance cameras were installed to prevent further dumping and encourage the community to report illegal dumping.

Education campaign

An education campaign was run to raise awareness of the problem and build the social norm that illegal dumping is wrong. The campaign promoted council services and told residents which commonly dumped items could be dropped at transfer stations for free. The campaign used:

- a letterbox drop
- the council's website
- television
- newspapers
- social media.

Council ran a survey before and after the campaign to learn if the campaign had changed residents' knowledge of council's waste services and illegal dumping.

What was the result?

- The project has provided much more accurate information about the amount of waste dumped. By its end over 180 tonnes of dumped waste had been reported. In contrast, in 2016, before the project started, only 22 tonnes of dumped waste had been reported.
- The 180 tonnes of waste collected included 80 car bodies and 10 tonnes of asbestos.
- Over 58 illegal dumping sites in state forests were identified and cleaned up.

- Two gates were installed and 30 surveillance cameras deployed in National Park dumping hotspots. (Unfortunately, several cameras were stolen.)
- 'Under surveillance' signage was installed to deter further dumping.
- The education campaign reached more than 35,000 people. Television advertising was found to be the most effective form of messaging, then newspapers and social media.
- The survey run before and after the campaign showed that residents' knowledge of waste services and illegal dumping had increased. Community reports of illegal dumping also increased.

What did Council learn?

Data collection

Using RIDonline to gather data was vital. It allowed the council to easily locate, identify and characterise illegally dumped waste.

Multi-agency collaboration

Involve all public land managers in your area. This project showed that collaboration can lead to a more holistic and effective outcome.

Coordination of all project partners and contractors was challenging. To ensure that the project progressed in a timely manner, the council spent a significant amount of time liaising with stakeholders on the project's progress and changes. While this was labour intensive, the outcome was extremely positive, and the project has given the council and other stakeholders a much better understanding of illegal dumping in the area. Without project partners and contractors that could address specific waste issues and increase the capacity of council, the project could not have achieved as much as it did.

Education

Ensure your residents are aware of waste services available. The council found that it was extremely important to educate residents on what can be dropped off for free at waste facilities. This was a key message of the project, as many of these materials – for example, whitegoods and e-waste – are often illegally dumped.

Holistic approach

Take a holistic approach. This campaign used an integrated approach of evidence gathering, clean-up, prevention infrastructure and education to successfully combat illegal dumping in the area.

Timing

Allow enough time to gather your data, identify the issue and plan your project based on the data. The comprehensive Port Macquarie–Hastings project took two years to deliver.

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