

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

# LITTER & ILLEGAL DUMPING ACTION PLAN



# BACKGROUND





Cairns faces the same litter challenges in its streets as any other city - cigarette butts, food wrappers and drink containers! But the 'City in a Rainforest' has the added challenge of managing litter in its urban bushland. These pockets of natural areas are dotted throughout the city and are litter hotspots because of their high usage, low surveillance and limited scope for bins. The Cities urban bushland is also under increasing pressure from illegal dumpers who use these areas to dispose of everything from car parts through to garden waste.

Cairns is built on a coastal floodplain that drains to the Great Barrier Reef, so litter and illegally dumped waste not only reduces public amenity and community pride, it also has the added impact of polluting our World Heritage listed icon if washed out to sea during the annual wet season rains.

As an active member of the Reef Guardian Council program, Council is committed to reducing the impacts of land-based runoff to the Great Barrier Reef, including litter and illegally dumped waste.

The Cairns Regional Council Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Plan sets goals and associated actions to address litter and illegal dumping through:

- *Infrastructure* that increases access to responsible waste disposal options.
- *Education* that increases the uptake of responsible waste disposal options.
- *Enforcement* that discourages irresponsible disposal options.

Fearnley Street Drain,  
Parramatta Park

*“Everything we  
do on the land  
is reflected in  
the health of  
our waterways”*

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Cover image:  
*‘What lies beneath’* courtesy of Ferdi Rizkiyanto

# INTRODUCTION

Cairns Regional Council is one of the lead agencies responsible for the management of litter and illegally dumped waste in the Cairns local government area.

Current responses include:

- Public place litter and recycling bins
- Kerbside collection of residential waste and recycling
- Waste and recycling transfer stations
- Street sweeping and CBD cleaning
- Litter traps in creeks and drains
- Litter collection by park and facility maintenance staff
- Illegal dumping investigation and enforcement
- Illegal dumping site management
- Support for clean-up activities

These ongoing actions:

- Promote public amenity, safety and civic pride
- Protect the regions environment and tourism drawcards
- Reduce clean-up costs in the long-term

## LITTER

is the incorrect disposal of any type of waste less than 200 litres in volume

*Queensland Waste Reduction and Recycling Act (2011)*

*Cigarette butts are the most common litter item in Cairns.*

## ILLEGAL DUMPING

is the unlawful deposit of waste that is 200 litres or more in volume.

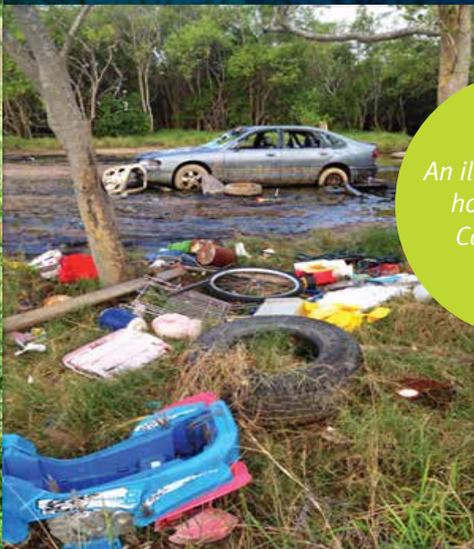
*Queensland Waste Reduction and Recycling Act (2011)*

This plan builds upon existing responses with:

- **Infrastructure actions** to increase access to responsible waste disposal options
- **Education actions** to increase the uptake of responsible disposal options
- **Enforcement actions** to discourage irresponsible waste disposal by increasing the risk of being caught

**THE AIM OF THIS PLAN IS TO GET MORE PEOPLE CHOOSING RESPONSIBLE WASTE DISPOSAL OPTIONS MORE OFTEN ►**

*An illegal dumping hotspot in the Cairns region*



# COUNCIL STAKEHOLDERS

Infrastructure, education and enforcement of littering and illegal dumping is a cross-council responsibility, summarised as follows:

## MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

### INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Infrastructure Services Department

- Public place litter and recycling bins
- Street sweeping
- Public place maintenance staff
- Stormwater management
- Illegal dumping site management

#### Water and Waste Department

- Kerbside collection
- Waste transfer stations
- Coordination of the Cairns Waste Reduction and Recycling Strategy

#### Community, Sport and Cultural Services

- Public place litter and recycling bins
- Public place maintenance staff
- Coordination of green space volunteers

### EDUCATION

#### Water and Waste Department

- Waste and recycling education
- Waste Transfer Station education

#### Planning and Environment Department

- Support for community clean up days
- Litter Education
- Support for single-use plastic reduction in Council and the wider community

#### Human Resources Department

- Marketing and communication support for infrastructure, education and enforcement activities
- Illegal dumping education

### ENFORCEMENT

#### Planning and Environment Department

- Investigation and enforcement of litter and illegal dumping offences under the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act (2011)*.

# EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

In addition to Cairns Regional Council, stakeholders involved in the management of litter and illegal dumping include:

- The Queensland Department of Environment and Science: lead agency for *Queensland's Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Plan* and *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011*.
- The Queensland Departments of: National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing; Natural Resources and Mines; Transport and Main Roads - agencies who have powers under their own respective legislation to combat littering and illegal dumping on land and in waterways they manage.
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA): manage the impacts of marine debris and ocean plastic via the *Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan*
- Non-profit groups, who are often at the forefront of clean-up activities, advocacy and community engagement.



# INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIONS

## AIM

Increase access to responsible waste disposal options

### LITTER

- Optimise the number, location and design of public place bins across the region
- Optimise the number, location and design of cigarette butt bins across the region
- Implement a staged roll-out of public place recycling bins
- Support community participation in the Queensland container refund scheme and plastic bag ban
- Utilise site specific infrastructure to address litter issues in hotspot locations
- Clean litter traps in accordance with maintenance schedules
- Collect litter data when cleaning litter traps to inform management responses
- Facilitate litter clean-ups in urban creeks and drains as part of infrastructure maintenance
- Investigate opportunities for ongoing monitoring of litter hotspots through existing maintenance programs
- Work with waste contractors to prevent the occurrence of litter from rubbish collection trucks.

### ILLEGAL DUMPING

- Restrict site access to dumping hotspots through site modification and utilise signage to inform the public of Transfer Station location, proximity and costs
- Investigate incentives to encourage responsible waste disposal behaviours in the wider community
- Increase community access to Transfer Station information, including what can be disposed free of charge
- Adhere to biosecurity procedures when cleaning up illegal dumping hotspots to prevent the spread of pests and weeds
- Work with public and private land managers to deliver a coordinated response to illegal dumping activities.

Waste and recycling bin station on the Cairns Esplanade

THIS BELONGS TO THE  
GREAT BARRIER REEF

The Great Northern  
Clean Up



## AIM

Change behaviours through  
community education  
and engagement

# EDUCATION ACTIONS

## LITTER

- Deliver an ongoing education campaign that promotes 'influencers' in the community to model responsible disposal options and discourage inappropriate disposal options.
- Work with schools to promote responsible disposal of waste at home, school and public places
- Work with community groups, sporting clubs and welfare groups to facilitate a sense of pride and ownership of a location through partnerships and local involvement
- Work with the tourism and hospitality sector to promote responsible disposal behaviours at local attractions
- Facilitate clean-up and community engagement activities in targeted locations via Clean Up Australia Day, the Great Northern Clean Up and other community clean up events.
- Facilitate litter data collection at community clean-up activities
- Implement source reduction initiatives to reduce council's contribution to the litter stream
- Facilitate source reduction initiatives for local industry and litter hotspots.

## ILLEGAL DUMPING

- Deliver an ongoing education and engagement campaign that:
  - promotes responsible disposal of waste
  - communicates free waste disposal services
  - encourages reporting of illegal dumping activities
  - highlights the penalties if caught illegal dumping
  - highlights the environmental impacts of illegal dumping
- Deliver targeted education messages to address dumping issues at specific locations
- Communicate the biosecurity risks associated with illegal dumping of garden and construction waste.



# ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

## ILLEGAL DUMPING

Local advertising to encourage community reporting of illegal dumping

IMPACTS MORE THAN THE ENVIRONMENT. IT ALSO IMPACTS OUR WAY OF LIFE.

SEE IT. REPORT IT. STOP IT. 24/7

 1300 69 22 47

CAIRNS, IT'S NOT A DUMP. LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY.



[WWW.CAIRNS.QLD.GOV.AU/ILLEGALDUMPING](http://WWW.CAIRNS.QLD.GOV.AU/ILLEGALDUMPING)

### AIM

Discourage inappropriate disposal behaviours by increasing the risk of being caught

### LITTER

- Conduct litter enforcement blitzes, with an emphasis on littering from vehicles (e.g. unsecured loads and cigarette butts)
- Communicate litter enforcement outcomes to the community to highlight the risk of being caught
- Encourage Council staff and community reporting of litter via the State Government online reporting tool
- Investigate opportunities for litter prevention through local laws e.g. banning of balloon releases in the Cairns LGA.

### ILLEGAL DUMPING

- Increase camera surveillance in dumping hotspots
- Communicate illegal dumping enforcement outcomes to the community to highlight the risk of being caught
- Encourage Council staff and community reporting of illegal dumping as part of ongoing education.

# MONITORING & EVALUATION

## AIM

Measure outcomes and determine future direction



The following performance measures are used to determine outcomes and guide future direction

**1**

**PERFORMANCE MEASURE**  
Reduced presence of litter in CBD, suburbs, beaches and green spaces

**MEASURED BY**

- GPT litter data (averages)
- GPT litter data (Site specific)
- Australian Marine Debris Database
- Litter hotspot surveys

**3**

**PERFORMANCE MEASURE**  
Community engagement in litter reduction activities and education programs

**MEASURED BY**

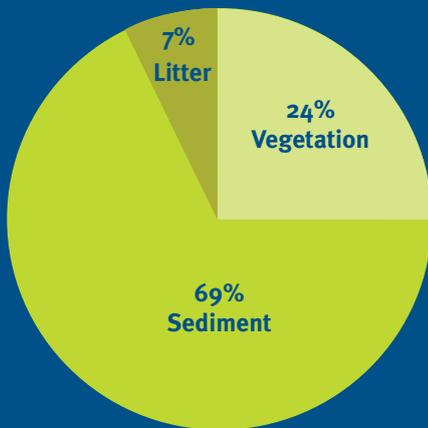
- Number and scale of community clean ups held annually

**2**

**PERFORMANCE MEASURE**  
Reduced incidence of illegal dumping in bushland and reserves

**MEASURED BY**

- Illegal dumping clean-up costs
- Illegal dumping weight / volume
- Community reporting levels
- Enforcement outcomes



**CAIRNS REGION**  
**GROSS POLLUTANT TRAPS 2016/17**  
Litter data from Council's GPT

## TOP 10 ITEMS CAIRNS LGA JULY 2009 TO APRIL 2017

Cairns litter data from the Australian Marine Debris Database

Plastic packaging food (wrap, packets, containers)	10%	4712
Aluminium cans	9%	4305
Cigarette butts and filters	9%	4293
Foam insulation and packaging (whole and remnants)	9%	4094
Plastic bits and pieces hard and solid	8%	3597
Glass or ceramic broken	5%	2335
Plastic drink bottles (water, juice, milk, soft drink)	5%	2308
Plastic film remnants (bits of plastic bag, wrap etc)	4%	2138
Lids and tops, pump spray, flow restrictor and similar	4%	2031
Fishing line in metres (recreation)	3%	1580

## TIMEFRAME AND RESOURCING

Council will implement this plan between 2018 and 2022 and report on progress via the annual State of Environment Report. In that time, initiatives that require additional resourcing (e.g. litter education resources) will have a business case prepared to enable appropriate budget allocation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following documents have informed the Cairns Regional Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Plan:

- Queensland's Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Plan - Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection
- Litterology - Understanding Littering and the Secrets to Clean Public Places (2015)
- Don't Waste Townsville - An integrated litter management strategy for Townsville City Council
- Keep Australia Beautiful, National Litter Index 2012/13
- Tangaroa Blue Australian Marine Debris Database

