

FIGHTING ILLEGAL DUMPING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM ROUND 1A – GRANT APPLICATION

PGS | 71/2/1-02 | #7837166

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. Retrospectively endorses the submission of a funding application under the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation’s Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program – Round 1A; and
2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* to finalise any and all matters relating to the above application including the execution of an associated grant agreement should Council’s application be successful.

INTERESTED PARTIES:

Not Applicable

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Queensland Government Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) has recently announced a new round of grant funding is available to Local Governments through the *Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program - Round 1A*. The program provides grant funding that supports local governments to continue to fund on-ground resources to investigate and respond to illegal dumping occurrences for a period of 3 years, with up to \$90,000 per year to support one full-time position, plus an additional \$25,000 in the first year for night-time surveillance activities.

Cairns Regional Council (Council) is a current recipient of funding under the *Local Government Illegal Dumping Partnership Program*, which has supported a dedicated full-time Illegal Dumping Compliance Officer to proactively identify and investigate illegal dumping across the region. This resourcing has delivered strong outcomes, including a high volume of investigations and the removal of significant quantities of illegally dumped waste, demonstrating the effectiveness of a targeted and coordinated compliance approach.

The *Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program - Round 1A* replaces this existing funding program and is open exclusively to current recipients. Council has applied under this round to continue the established resourcing through a fixed-term Illegal Dumping Compliance Officer, together with additional funding for nighttime patrols and the purchase of a nighttime-capable surveillance camera.

Council was notified of the funding availability through communication received on 28 January 2026, with applications due by 25 February 2026. Executive support was gained for the application, however there was no opportunity to present to Council prior to the due date.

Therefore, it is recommended that Council retrospectively endorses the submission of a grant funding application under this program.

BACKGROUND:

The State Government, through the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, originally announced the *Illegal Dumping Partnership Program* in 2019. This program provided grants to fund additional on-ground resources to investigate and respond to illegal dumping occurrences. Cairns Regional Council applied for and was successful in obtaining funding for two illegal dumping compliance officers, as well as some resource funding for signage, surveillance equipment and personal protective equipment for a 12-month period.

In December 2021, the state government announced round 2A of the *Local Government Illegal Dumping Partnership Program* which Cairns Regional Council applied for and was successful in gaining funding for one compliance officer on a full-time, fixed term basis to collaboratively address the challenges faced by illegal dumping across the State.

Since participating in the *Local Government Illegal Dumping Partnership Program*, Council's dedicated illegal dumping compliance resource has worked collaboratively with state agencies, neighbouring councils and internal operational teams to investigate and respond to illegal dumping incidents across the Cairns region. Through this program to date, 1,498 illegal dumping reports have been investigated, resulting in the removal of almost 1.4 million litres of illegally dumped waste from the Cairns local government area. These outcomes demonstrate the value of dedicated compliance resources in identifying dumping hotspots, responding to community reports and reducing the environmental and amenity impacts associated with illegal dumping activities.

The objectives of the current program and the new program are the same which enables continuity of reporting and allows a greater reach across Queensland to monitor, act on and prevent illegal dumping activities by:

- funding additional on-ground officers to investigate and respond to illegal dumping occurrences;
- proactively developing local government capabilities through targeted training and support programs;
- introducing innovative solutions and new ways of working across government to prevent and mitigate illegal dumping;
- boosting intelligence and data reporting capabilities on illegal dumping activities;
- establishing a platform for neighbouring council collaboration; and
- working collaboratively to develop long-term sustainable strategies.

The grant funding successfully gained in early 2022 under the *Local Government Illegal Dumping Partnership Program Round 2A* has continued through extensions with a current completion date of November 2026.

On 28 January 2026, the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation announced the new *Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program - Round 1A*, should Council be successful in its application for funding under this program it will replace the current grant agreement.

The *Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program - Round 1A* provides councils with the opportunity to secure funding for one full-time Illegal Dumping Compliance Officer for a period of three years, with funding of \$90,000 per year.

The program also allows councils to apply for an additional \$25,000 in the first year to support initiatives such as nighttime patrols or the purchase of equipment to enable nighttime surveillance.

Cairns Regional Council has applied for funding to support both components of the program, including the establishment of a full-time fixed-term Illegal Dumping Compliance Officer (\$90,000 per year for three years), as well as \$25,000 in year one to fund nighttime patrols and the purchase of a nighttime-capable surveillance camera.

COMMENT:

Local Government plays a critical role in waste management including waste collection services, the provision of street bins, street cleaning activities and the operation of waste transfer and disposal facilities. The ability to apply for and gain funding from DETSI for the purpose of compliance and enforcement in accordance with the *Waste, Reduction and Recycling Act 2011* provides Council with an additional dedicated compliance resource to enhance local government's role in waste management. The collaborative approach also enables cross council learnings and enhanced resourcing in this critical area.

This initiative aligns with the principles outlined in Cairns Regional Council's Licensing and Compliance Framework, which promotes a proactive, risk-based and collaborative approach to compliance. The Framework recognises that effective regulatory outcomes are achieved through strong partnerships with other agencies, targeted compliance activity and information sharing to address emerging risks.

Participation in the Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program will enable Council to work alongside state agencies and other local governments to strengthen intelligence, share learnings and coordinate enforcement efforts, ultimately delivering improved environmental and compliance outcomes for the Cairns region.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (Recommended)

That Council:

1. Retrospectively endorses the submission of a funding application under the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program – Round 1A; and

2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* to finalise any and all matters relating to the above application including the execution of an associated grant agreement should Council's application be successful.

Option 2

That Council:

1. Does not support the submission of an application for funding under the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program – Round 1A; and
2. Withdraws its grant funding submission.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Council has previously operated under a grant agreement through the *Local Government Illegal Dumping Partnership Program*, and therefore has an established understanding of the associated governance, reporting requirements and operational processes. This experience has enabled Council to effectively manage the compliance activities, partnership arrangements and funding obligations associated with this type of program.

Accordingly, there are minimal risks associated with this grant funding submission. Any risks will be managed in accordance with Council's standard project management processes and risk management procedures associated with compliance-based roles, drawing on Council's prior experience in delivering similar grant-funded initiatives.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

If successful, Council would extend the current resourcing arrangement for the illegal dumping compliance officer to the end of the grant funding period. The salary costs associated with the position will be fully covered by the grant funding.

Additional costs to Council are estimated at \$22,500 (inc GST) total across the 3-year period for dedicated hire and use of a vehicle. This has been budgeted for the 25/26 financial year and is included in the proposed budget for the 26/27 financial year.

Natural Environment:

Cairns is located on a coastal floodplain that drains through a network of creeks, wetlands and waterways to the Great Barrier Reef. As a result, litter and illegally dumped waste within the local government area has the potential to be mobilised during heavy rainfall events and transported through stormwater systems and waterways into the marine environment.

Illegal dumping not only impacts public amenity and community pride but also presents broader environmental risks including pollution of waterways, harm to wildlife, contamination of sensitive habitats and increased waste entering the Great Barrier Reef catchment. Proactive identification and enforcement in relation to illegal dumping is therefore an important component of protecting Cairns' natural assets.

As an active member of the Reef Guardian Council program, Cairns Regional Council is committed to reducing the impacts of land-based pollution entering the Great Barrier Reef catchment. Initiatives that support the investigation, prevention and deterrence of illegal dumping contribute directly to these objectives by reducing waste entering waterways and improving environmental outcomes across the region.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

- Focus 2 - Natural Assets – Promoting, protecting and enhancing our iconic natural environment now and for generations to come.

Strategies - Value and protect Cairns' pristine natural environment

- Focus 5 – Focused Council – Delivering for community through strong government and informed decision making.

Strategies - Build effective partnerships with community and governments

Statutory:

The *Fighting Illegal Dumping Partnership Program – Round 1A* is open to local governments in Queensland who have accepted the delegations regarding enforcement of offences relating to illegal dumping under the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011*. Council has accepted the delegations as they relate to the Act and is therefore eligible to apply.

The grant funding applied for under this program supports Council in undertaking these statutory responsibilities by providing additional resources to investigate illegal dumping incidents, identify offenders and pursue appropriate enforcement action where required.



Amy Patterson
Executive Manager Licensing and Compliance



Mark Davey
Director Planning, Growth and Sustainability