

Case Study: Normalising Council Clean Up to Prevent Illegal Dumping

COUNCIL NAME

Lane Cove Council

WEB ADDRESS

lanecove.nsw.gov.au

POPULATION

35,959

Overview

To manage illegal dumping, Lane Cove Council introduced a suite of behaviour change initiatives that were designed to modify old social norms around kerbside dumping. Council encouraged residents to do the right thing, by prompting the use of Council's Clean Up service. Council simultaneously discouraged future dumping by tagging illegal dump sites and issuing warnings. These simple activities facilitated an 85% reduction in kerbside dumping.

Background

In 2015, Council spent over \$16,000 cleaning up 254 kerbside dumping incidents. Most of the incidents (63%) occurred at multi-unit dwellings (MUDs). Council received regular community complaints regarding street amenity. The goals of the project were to reduce the frequency of illegal dumping at MUD hotspots and improve the amenity of streets outside MUDs by managing illegal dumping.

Implementation

The project aimed to dissuade future dumping of waste, and solidify a new social norm where kerbside dumping was not common. To do this, council implemented a combination of preventative and pro-active intervention measures to significantly reduce dumping in hotspot areas.

An investment of \$90,000 from the NSW EPA's Better Waste and Recycling Fund was used to employ a project officer for a period of up to two years, beginning in January 2016. The project officer collaboratively developed program logic and implementation, monitoring and evaluation plans. The target audience was residents of multi-unit dwellings and renters.

Council partnered with strata and property managers to distribute information about council services. Strata Committees from the 111 target MUDs were contacted by letter during summer 2016 offering free promotional materials for display inside buildings. Follow up correspondence and promotions were distributed in winter. Council audited building displays to ensure 100% of target residents received information in some form by December 2016.

Waste branded envelopes were distributed with rates notices on one occasion. Promotional resources were sent with Section 94 certificates, and webpages were updated to publicise new services. Additionally, 11 Real Estate Agencies in Lane Cove's CBD were provided with promotional materials to distribute with new rental agreements within the Lane Cove LGA.

A three day/week program of patrolling hotspots allowed instant interventions on dumping incidents and provided real time feedback to the community. Illegally dumped material stickers and tape were applied to new illegal dumping sites. 'Under investigation' flyers were distributed to letterboxes nearby. This approach was founded on Social Learning Theory (Bandura 1977),



which states that we learn behaviours by trial and error; and we learn by observing others. Regular monitoring began to reveal the impacts and effectiveness of these activities so adjustments were made to accommodate more of these activities.

Outcomes

By May 2017, the project effectively resulted in 85% fewer illegal dumping incidents in targeted hotspot areas compared to 2015 figures. Overall, the cost to council of collecting the illegal dump material was reduced by 57%; tonnages of household dumping were halved; street amenity was immediately improved; and community satisfaction in council services was raised.



The most surprising result was the self-removal of dumped items following Council intervention. Of the 312 new incidents observed between January 2016 and May 2017, 60% were self-removed following the tagging of the site. This produced a significant cost saving for Council and the community. Of the self-removed dump sites, 30% were removed within 48 hours of Council intervention.

Key Learnings

To fully establish a long-lasting behaviour change and new social norm, particularly where transient populations occur, long-term reinforcement of the new social norm and ongoing council activity is vital. Council learnt the value of consistent and regular interaction with the community for reinforcing standards of acceptability and motivating changes in behaviour. This consistent and visible presence, through multiple media, has evidently reinforced the messages council aimed to promote.

The next steps are to widen the project's geographical area and further develop the new social norm where kerbside dumping is uncommon. Cross-border partnerships are currently being developed with neighbouring councils to expand the program.

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