

- **Influence and change attitudes** - This is a long-term goal to change perceptions that dumping is acceptable. Need to stress that dumping is not socially acceptable and build social/peer pressure to influence behaviour. (e.g., "Tosser" campaign)
- **Enforce/reinforce community stance** - Highlight that dumping is illegal through a system of penalties and fines, which is well publicised (e.g., "Tosser" campaign).

There were significant differences in awareness of disposal facilities, knowledge of available options, and general attitudes towards illegal dumping among the main target groups. As such, while there may be common components in any educational campaign, targeted approaches may be required to effectively reach each group.

A summary of the main target groups, their attitudes and possible educational objectives is provided below:

Target group	Attitudes	Educational objectives
Owners	They recognise the issue, in terms of property values and safety and try to conform.	Information to maintain/increase awareness and reinforce behaviour.
Renters (long-term)	They know it is wrong, but see it as convenient, and rationalise that it is recycling. Know about fines, but do not think that they are enforced.	Highlight that dumping is not socially acceptable behaviour and it is not the norm. Improve awareness of disposal options.
Renters (short-term)	They have limited connection to the area and neighbours and are less likely to see it as a problem. They feel that it is OK to dump as other people also do it.	Improve awareness of disposal options for new tenants, through 'information kits'. Outline correct behaviour and reinforce that dumping is not the norm.
Public housing residents	They see it as the only real alternative and think 'proper' disposal is expensive.	Inform them of the full range of available disposal options.
NESB residents	They see it as a socially acceptable behaviour. Feel that Councils are responsible for cleaning up illegally dumped rubbish.	Outline correct behaviour in native language. Improve awareness of disposal options by word of mouth.

The final report is available from our website: [www.resource.nsw.gov.au](http://www.resource.nsw.gov.au)

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# An assessment

## of attitudes and behaviour amongst multi unit dwelling residents in relation to illegal dumping

### Background

Councils have long faced the problem of illegal dumping around multi unit dwellings (MUDs), but little formal research has been undertaken to help develop suitable education or information programs to tackle this problem. The Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW), Sustainability Programs Division (previously Resource NSW), commissioned Woolcott Research Pty Ltd in 2003 to assess the attitudes and behaviour of MUD residents in relation to illegal dumping practices. This is a brief summary of the key findings of the study.

### Aim and scope of the study

The study aimed to obtain a detailed understanding of the profiles of particular resident groups and their attitudes and behaviour to help inform state and local government education programs to prevent illegal dumping around MUDs (defined as those having three or more properties/units on the same parcel of land). The target resident groups were owners, renters, public housing residents (Department of Housing) and residents from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB).

### Research methods

An initial quantitative phase involved 600 twelve-minute telephone interviews with residents of MUDs within the following 17 local government areas (LGA):

Bankstown	Newcastle	Rockdale
Sutherland Shire	Waverley	Canterbury
North Sydney	Ryde	Sydney City
Wollongong	Fairfield	Parramatta
South Sydney	Warringah	Woollahra
Holroyd	Randwick	

These council areas were chosen using the following criteria:

- Number of MUDs per LGA
- Number of MUDs rented per LGA
- Number of NESB persons per LGA
- Number of MUDs rented under a state/territory housing authority per LGA

A qualitative phase involved 10 focus group discussions with MUD residents - five with owners, renters and public housing residents and the rest with NESB residents.

### Key findings - qualitative and quantitative research

#### Illegal dumping as an issue

Litter and illegal dumping did not rate highly (6%) when survey respondents were asked unprompted what they didn't like about their area. In the focus groups it was also unlikely to be mentioned unprompted, and when prompted it was seen as an issue but not regarded as a major problem. Most felt that illegal dumping was a temporary problem as the rubbish is eventually cleared and, other than being unsightly, the rubbish had no real effect on their lives. Only owners expressed concern about their children's health or safety from illegally dumped rubbish.

#### Illegal dumping profile

The majority of respondents (59%) indicated that illegal dumping occurred in their area. Almost half of these respondents said they noticed it at least weekly.



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About 14% of respondents admitted that they had dumped rubbish illegally. Public housing residents and NESB residents admitted to this behaviour more than the other groups. About 7% of owners admitted that they had illegally dumped rubbish. This varied somewhat at the group interviews where most participants admitted that they had, at some stage, dumped material.

Those who admitted to dumping were more likely to be slightly younger; have lower white-collar jobs; be from a non-English speaking background; be short-term residents (less than three years); and be renters of flats, units or apartments (and not townhouses or villas). The average 'dumper' also did not regard dumping as 'illegal', as authorities seemed to accept the situation by clearing the rubbish or not imposing fines. Nevertheless, almost 63% of the respondents were aware that some councils issue fines for illegal dumping. The level of awareness of fines increased according to the length of time respondents had lived at their place of residence.

### Reasons for illegal dumping

Respondents gave various reasons for illegally dumping. These included:

- Everyone does it; and there is almost certainly going to be no reprisal;
- Living in a multiunit dwelling means the culprit is not likely to be identified;
- Insufficient storage space while waiting for Council Clean-up Day;
- Taking the item to the tip is inconvenient and expensive; and,
- It is easy to dump something on an existing pile.

Overall, the reasons why different target groups dumped correlated with the degree of 'connectedness' that each group feels with its place of residence. Owners tend to be very mindful of the resale value of their properties and feel the most connected with their neighbourhood. The long-term renters share many characteristics with the owners however the short-term renters are less likely to be concerned about their neighbourhood's appearance. NESB residents fit between the two groups of renters. Public housing tenants had the least level of 'connectedness'.

Respondents were also asked why they thought others dumped. The most common reason was that "people can't be bothered or don't care about doing the right thing". The next most common reason was that "people know that the council will pick it up anyway". NESB residents felt that people dumped because "they don't know what else to do with it" or simply said, "don't know" - suggesting that knowledge and awareness of alternative disposal methods are important issues to address for this group. Other reasons cited by respondents included, cost of disposal; limited storage facilities; and lack of transport.

### Attitudes towards illegal dumping

Respondents were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements related to illegal dumping.

Overall, the findings suggested that respondents viewed dumping as a minor misdemeanour at worst and apathy and complacency was seen to be an issue. Most perceived that 'correct' disposal methods are costly and some consider dumping as a way to recycle goods because others came and took reusable items from the pile. Most respondents considered it was the council's responsibility to keep streets and pavements around housing free of rubbish (64%) and most agreed that council makes it easy to dispose properly (59%).

NESB residents were more likely than the total respondent base to agree that; most people have to dump materials from time to time, it is too much of an effort to try to dispose of things properly and they don't have anything else to do with used items but put them out and hope someone takes them.

Public housing residents were also more likely to agree that they don't have anything else to do with used items while owners were less likely to agree with this statement.

### Awareness of disposal options

There was generally a limited awareness of disposal options across all target groups. Owners were most aware of available services for unwanted items. They knew about Council Clean-up days and some planned their disposal around these times. They were also aware of waste management facilities (e.g. landfills or waste transfer stations), but not necessarily familiar with them or aware of the cost as very few had used these facilities. Some owners were aware of Council at call services but assumed that this involved a cost and did not use it. Owners were also aware of special chemical collections (but had not necessarily used them).

Renters were also aware of the concept of Council Clean-up days, but did not know when they occurred. They were aware of waste management facilities, but did not know where they were and had never used them, often citing lack of transport and inconvenience for not using these facilities. Renters were generally not aware of special chemical collections.

NESB residents had limited knowledge of alternative disposal options. Some were aware of Council Clean-up days but many confused the event with Clean-up Australia day. Only a few were aware of the existence and availability of waste management facilities. Terminology was a critical issue for this group, with the term tip not being well understood and the group generally preferred the term rubbish dump.

Respondents were asked unprompted to indicate what they thought happened to dumped materials that were left out on the street. The top 3 responses were; normal council garbage service collects it (35%), other people take the material and use it (33%) and council sends around a special clean up service (29%).

### Education and information

About 89% of the respondents said they would welcome more education and information, especially on the following:

- Advance notice of Council Clean-up dates, with a reminder about two weeks before each day; rules on what you can put out and when to do so; and information on what to do with materials that will not be collected (and a Helpline for questions on specific items);
- Details of the local waste management facility - its location (with map); the cost of using it; and what you can take to the facility;
- Details of alternative disposal options (such as recycling centres, charities).

The preferred format for information delivery differed for each group:

- **Owners** - Limited interest in getting information from local libraries or the Internet. Felt that radio and newspaper advertising may be too general. Preferred hard copy (laminated) information cards, not with rates notices (as they only paid attention to the bill), but through a separate mail-out or letterbox drop.
- **Renters** - As per owners, but felt they may miss a letterbox drop (if they moved in later). Preferred real estate agents providing the information when moving in and moving out; posters in common area notice boards; and information in local directories.

- **Public housing tenants** - Felt that letterbox drops could be dismissed as 'junk mail'. Very few attended community meetings held by the Department of Housing or read newspapers issued by the Department. Preferred commercial radio or newspaper advertisements or direct contact from Councils.
- **NESB Residents** - Preferred delivery of information in their own language and suggested information dissemination through cultural/community centres; ethnic radio and TV stations and newspapers; bilingual educators; and temples or other places of worship.

## Conclusions

Overall, people who live in MUDs do not view dumping of household materials as a priority issue. Most people recognise that dumping occurs but do not necessarily think that it is wrong, and certainly do not consider it is illegal. It has become an easy disposal option for household items because it is seen as a social norm; because fines do not appear to be imposed; and Councils would ultimately collect the items.

While dumping may have been seen as wrong by some they did not see it in the same level as other illegal activities. The fact that authorities seem to accept the situation (by clearing away the problem, not imposing fines, not alerting people to their existence) really lessened the severity of the issue for many.

Most respondents were open to the idea of education about illegal dumping and were willing to receive information. However, it is very likely that only those who have a propensity to do the right thing will act on this information. Four levels of action have been identified to tackle the issue of illegal dumping. These are:

- **Increase awareness** - provide targeted information on disposal options to those who want to do the right thing (owners and long term renters), but this alone is unlikely to change the behaviour of others.
- **Make it easy to dispose of things** - Facilities and options need to be easily available and convenient. The issue of service cost may have to be addressed for lower income groups. Again this is only likely to work for those with a propensity to do the right thing.