



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ILLEGAL WASTE REPORT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO ILLEGAL DUMPING

2020
2021

INSIGHTS FROM OUR
ANNUAL ILLEGAL WASTE SURVEY



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FOREWORD



Littering and illegal dumping harms our environment and our health, creating a significant challenge for land managers and litter authorities across Victoria. Some may find the results of the 2020/21 annual illegal waste survey disheartening.

Illegal waste continues to impact land managers across Victoria, with the cost of illegal waste to Victorian councils increasing by 66% to over \$148,000,000. More worryingly is the cost per incident increase of 95% to \$529 per incident, with responses from Local Government indicating a significant increase in commercial operators and rogue waste collection companies depositing waste unlawfully.

There is, however, good news.

Responses to the 2020/21 Annual Illegal Waste Survey indicate that the training, roleplays and scenario-based workshops provided by Waste Enforcement Association Australia (WEAA) have reduced the biggest barriers to enforcement identified in the previous year: a lack of training, investigation knowledge and concerns for personal safety.

The WEAA has a vision to see skilled and respected authorised officers — who are taking unified action to prevent illegal waste — across the country. To see the activities implemented in response to the 2019/20 Annual Illegal Waste Survey bring benefit to authorised officers and assist them with their investigation and enforcement activities is invigorating.

The 2020/21 Annual Illegal Waste Survey will once again provide the fundamental evidence used to design training, programs and resources that are adaptive to the changing issues of illegal waste. The association has already implemented intelligence sharing tools and special interest groups in response to the emerging tyre dumping trend identified in this year's survey, with more initiatives on green waste, contaminated soil and commercial operators under development.

One of our proudest outcomes from the Annual Illegal Waste Survey was identifying the need to deliver free member training days to ensure all authorised officers have access to standardised training endorsed by the Environment Protection Authority in Victoria. The free member training day delivered training to more than 120 authorised officers from organisations around Victoria and will become an annual event which delivers training to assist officers respond to emerging trends identified in this report every year.

Finally, we extend our gratitude to the Local Governments and authorised officers who contributed to the Annual Illegal Waste Survey.

Regards,

Samuel Lawson

BACKGROUND

The Waste Enforcement Association Australia (WEAA)

The Waste Enforcement Association Australia (WEAA) is run with the purpose of reducing illegal waste nationwide. WEAA currently operates the Litter Enforcement Officer Network (LEON) in Victoria and seeks to deliver similar operating models nationwide.

WEAA is committed to supporting Australian communities, charities, organisations and regulatory agencies to reduce illegal waste by delivering training, research and intelligence sharing platforms. WEAA has a vision for skilled and respected authorised officers and organisations that take a coordinated approach to reducing illegal waste.

Litter Enforcement Officer Network

WEAA works to see respected and skilled enforcement officers working against litter and illegal dumping in the state of Victoria.

WEAA works to see land managers take unified action in preventing and enforcing litter and illegal dumping in the state of Victoria.

We achieve our vision by focusing on:

- upskilling authorised officers
- determining and driving best practice
- increasing state of knowledge
- encouraging strong enforcement relationships between land managers

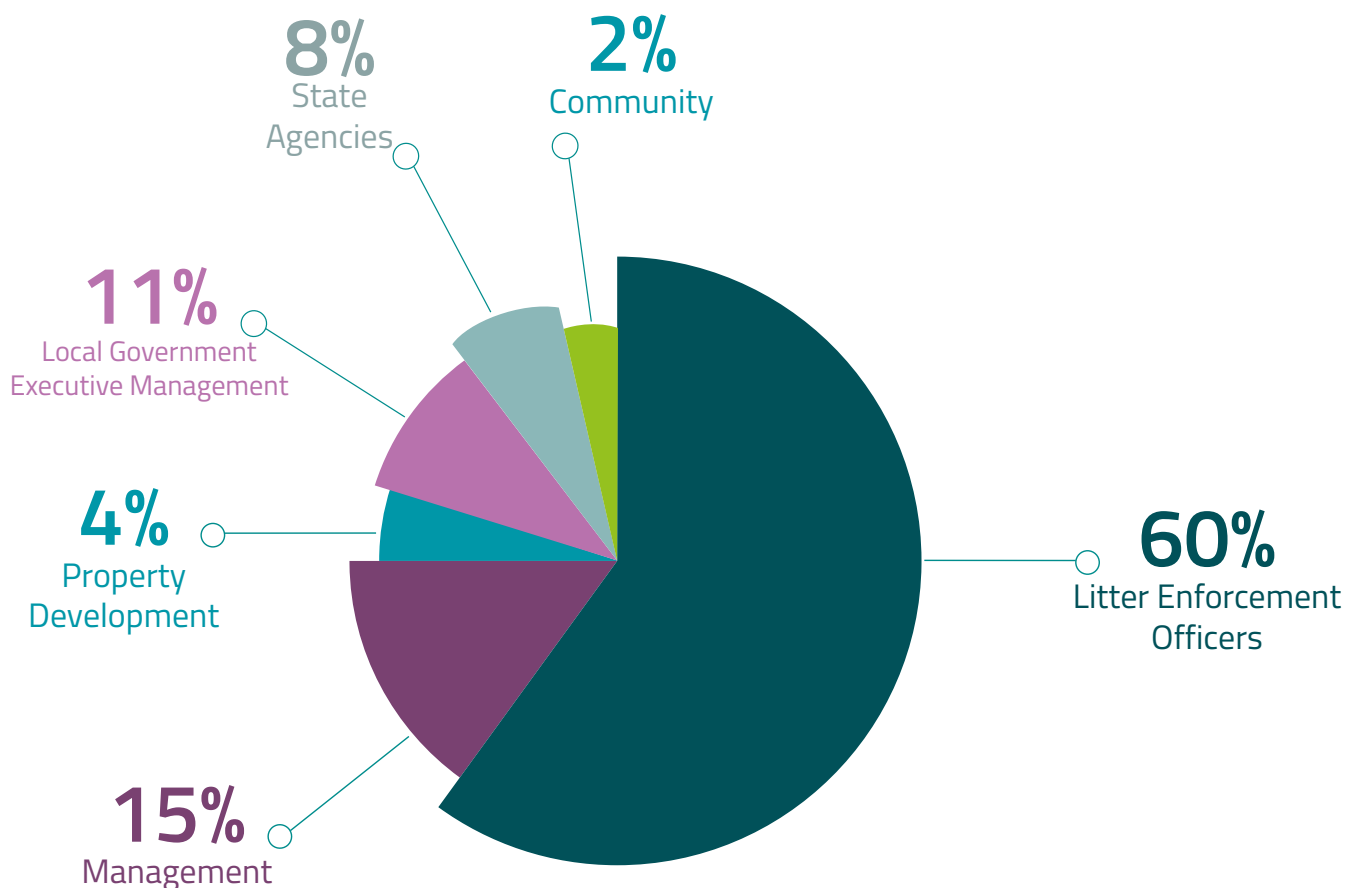
This is done via:

- regular member meetings
- member training
- various resources
- advocacy on behalf of our members
- research



NO DUMPING
VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED

WEAA IN 2022



MORE THAN

600
 INDIVIDUAL
 MEMBERS


76
 COUNCILS

1,100
 SUBSCRIBERS
 FROM **160**
 ORGANISATIONS

EPA Victoria
 Parks Victoria
 Department of Transport
 Regional Roads Victoria
 VicRoads
 Metro
 V-Line
 PTV
 Victrack

Neighbourhood Watch
 Melbourne Water
 DELWP
 Sustainability Victoria
 WRRGs
 Charitable stores
 Property developers
 Water catchment authorities
 Industry associations

ANNUAL ILLEGAL WASTE SURVEY

About the Annual Illegal Waste Survey

The Annual Illegal Waste Survey is the peak knowledge of the state of Illegal Waste in Victoria and Australia.

The survey provides:

- robust data on illegal waste in Victoria
- an evidence base for stakeholders to design and implement illegal waste prevention and enforcement programs
- an indication of the environmental, social and financial costs to Local Government each year
- guidance on the changes and emerging trends being seen on the ground for illegal waste

The survey guides the development and implementation of activities in the Waste Enforcement Association Australia and is shared with leaders from local, state and federal government to provide insight into the changes in illegal waste.

Survey design

The Annual Illegal Waste Survey was developed to understand the impacts of illegal waste on local government.

The 2020/21 Annual Illegal Waste Survey was designed to highlight emerging trends and new information that can be utilised to assist in designing programs and responses to illegal waste. An overview of actions and outcomes culminating from the survey will demonstrate the power of continued information sharing and collaboration with a leading network organisation.

The survey analysed:

- challenges
- responses
- education
- infrastructure
- incidents
- enforcement

- collection
- disposal
- internal/ external working relationship
- impacts on:
 - environment
 - community
 - wildlife
 - how councils could be supported better
 - offender profile

This would be used to:

- inform WEAA work and support members
- inform WEAA training development
- inform local government that participated in the survey
- inform state government as to local government priorities
- broadly inform Victorian stakeholders of the impacts of illegal waste

Survey methodology



Step 1

Emails were sent to all Victorian local governments asking them to participate in the survey. Typically, a Local Laws or Waste Coordinator would arrange the survey.

Step 2

Surveys were carried out using a virtual interview from November to February 2021 to gather data. The survey specifically collected information relating to the 2019/20 financial year.

Step 3

This survey was conducted over Zoom. Some respondents then provided further information after the survey, needing to refer to local government systems or obtain advice from others in local government.

Outcomes for councils

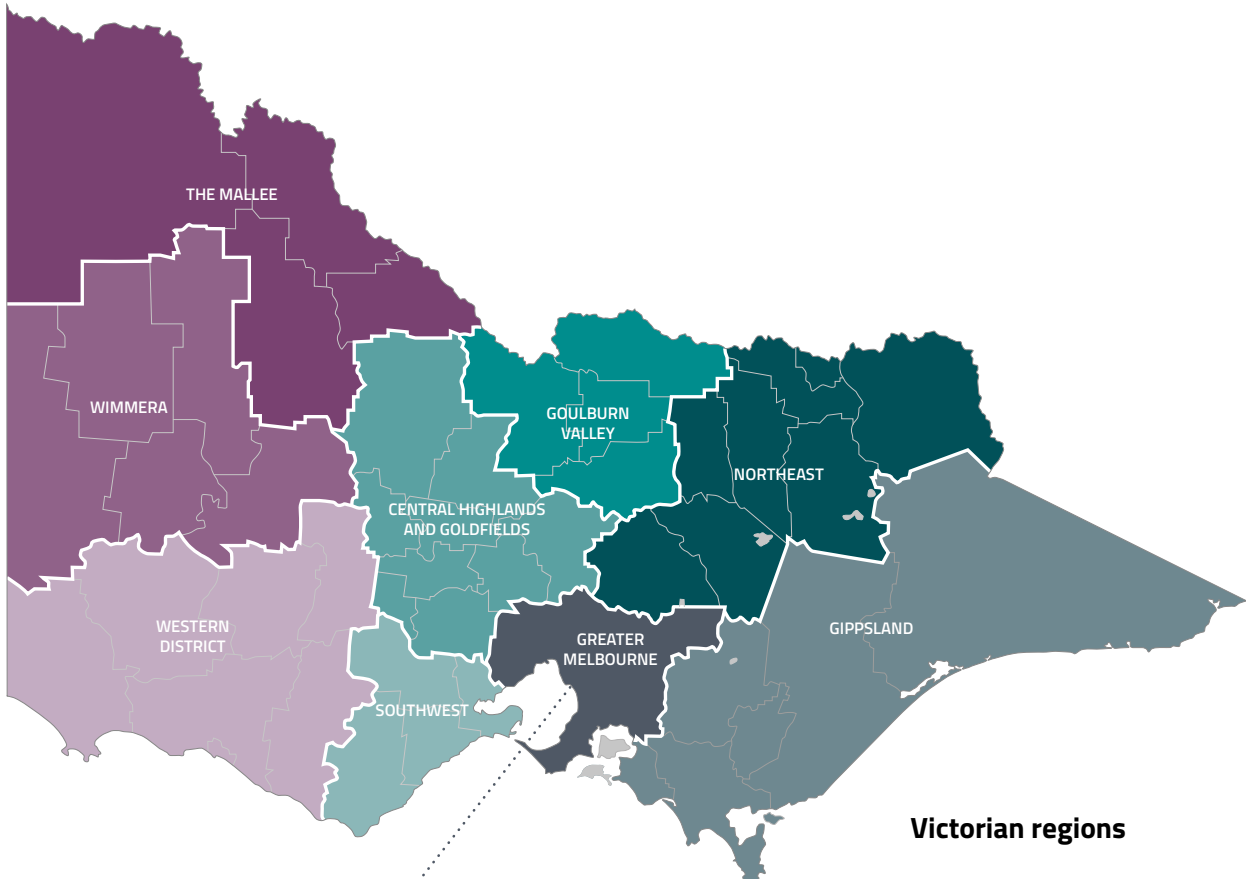
Councils receive an impartial summary of the results, providing insight into state-wide costs of illegal waste and how other councils are approaching the issue. This data also allows WEAA to advocate to state government and the public to raise awareness of the cost burden of illegal waste on local government.

Finally, survey information is used to plan upcoming resources and training to support Litter Enforcement Officers in local government.

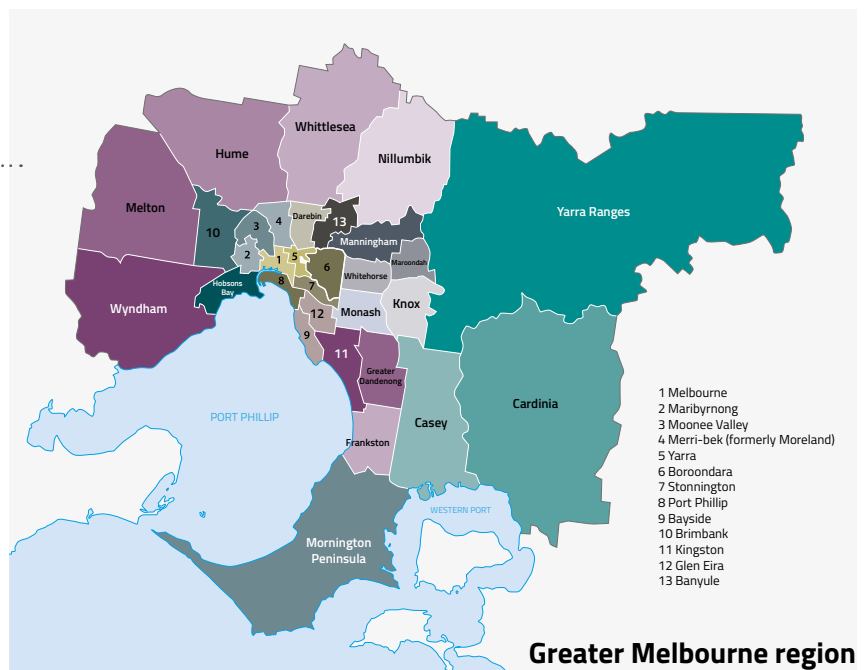
Data use and privacy

WEAA adheres to the Victorian Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. Council names are stored separately to survey data and survey data will always be presented as an aggregate. WEAA uses regional clusters of councils to communicate aggregated regional data.

The regions are as follows:



Victorian regions



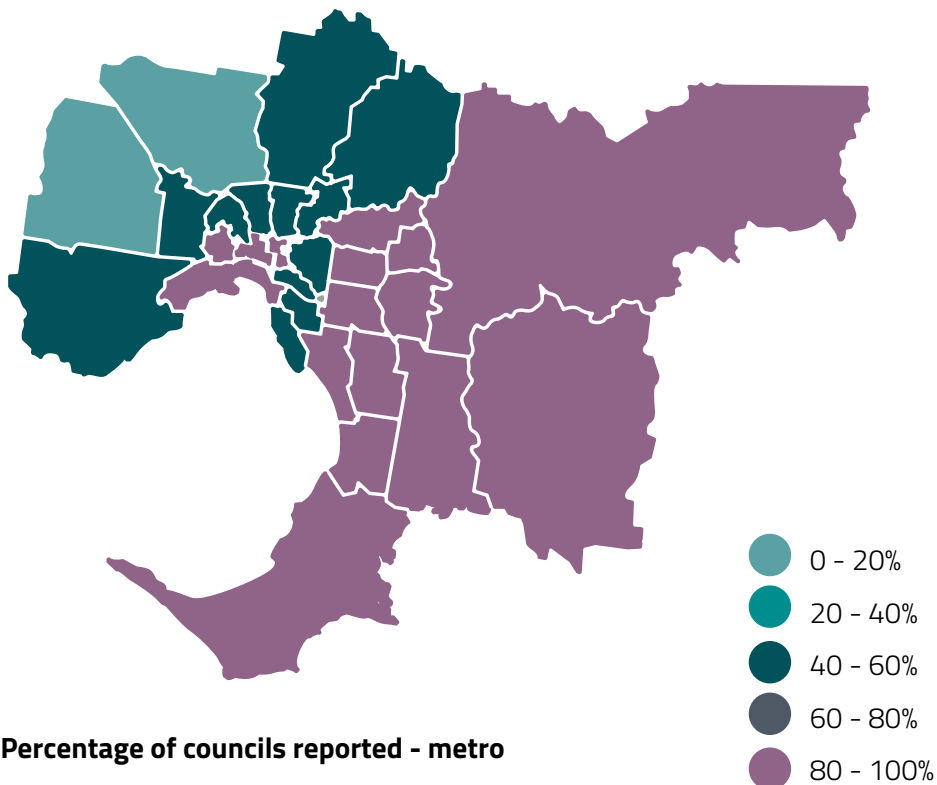
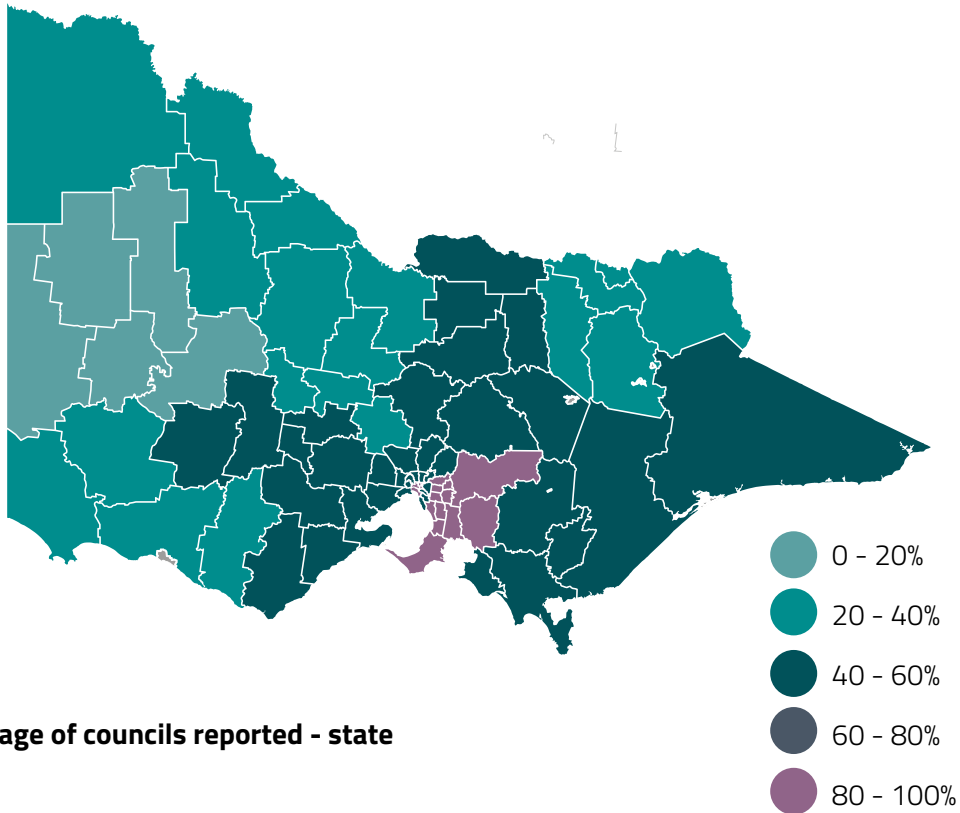
Greater Melbourne region

In addition, interface councils are assessed as a region to help understand illegal waste from the perspective of these councils who share similar geographical and socio-economic factors along growth corridors.

Response distribution

Sixty-one out of the 79 Victorian councils participated, with a representative sample of regional and metropolitan councils – by local government area – not accounting for population.

With this sample size and distribution, costs and incidents were reliably extrapolated for all 61 councils in Victoria.



VICTORIAN SNAPSHOT



Officers reported a 27% decrease in illegal waste incidents, with 41 incidents per 1,000 people being cited in the survey data. Dumping of items such as hard rubbish on nature strips, green waste, mattresses and construction waste continue to be high priority problem areas for councils.

When compared to the 2019/20 survey data, officers in 2020/21 reported a 66% increase in total cost attributed to managing illegal waste, amounting

to \$148,160,000. On average, \$529 was spent per incident, reflecting a 95% increase on expenditure when compared to the 2019/20 data. The increase was attributed to an increase in the amount of commercial and rogue operators depositing large amounts of waste unlawfully, resulting in increased collection costs for Local Government.

Local governments and illegal waste

This survey collected information on how local government responds to illegal waste, including the processes used, how resources are allocated and the barriers faced by councils or their staff.

Leading challenges

The top five challenges reported by councils as ongoing challenges include lack of resources and time; commercial operators; transient populations; evidence gathering; and lack of community education.

In addition, councils were asked what their 'circuit breaker' challenge was to identify which barrier to overcome, to begin addressing others.

Circuit breaker challenges named were:

- reducing misuse of council services
- educating commercial and building site management
- training
- ability to enforce
- organisational policy or processes

Emerging trends were noted by officers from their experience in the field. These included rogue commercial operators, rogue waste collections, tyre dumping and green waste dumping. The survey also investigated offender profiles, with the most identified ones being building site operators, moving renters, rogue rubbish collectors and households.

The survey then explored how local government uses resources when responding to illegal waste.



TOP ONGOING CHALLENGES

- Lack of resources or time
- Commercial operators
- Transient populations
- Obtaining evidence
- Lack of education



CIRCUIT BREAKERS IDENTIFIED

- Reducing misuse of council services
- Educating commercial and building site management
- Training
- Ability to enforce
- Organisational policy or processes



EMERGING TRENDS

- Commercial operators
- Rogue waste collection
- Tyre dumping
- Green waste dumping



OFFENDER PROFILES

- Renters moving
- Building site operators
- Rogue rubbish collectors
- Households

LITTER AND ILLEGAL DUMPING FROM A COUNCIL PERSPECTIVE



Infrastructure & services

NO dedicated staff

Cost of infrastructure
\$140,000 (-48%)

Cost of services \$870,000

Surveillance:

- 3 mobile cameras
- 5 fixed cameras
- cost \$23,000
- more cameras needed
- registration recognition

Most effective:

- signage
- hardwaste collection
- surveillance

Average cost of illegal waste infrastructure showed a 48% reduction in 2020/21 from \$270,000 to \$140,000, with a total cost of services amounting to \$870,000 per annum.

Officers indicated they strongly believed these systems have a significant impact on reducing illegal waste incidence but could not provide robust data to demonstrate this. This lack of measurement and reporting is likely due to the lack of staff committed to managing infrastructure to reduce illegal waste.

Resources

Despite an increase in annual expenditure on services and infrastructure to reduce illegal waste, no council employed a dedicated staff member to manage this infrastructure.

The most commonly used illegal waste infrastructure included:

- surveillance
- hard waste collection
- drop off days
- bollards
- charity bins

Less commonly used illegal waste infrastructure included:

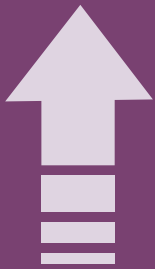
- bins
- bollard cameras
- community skip bins
- gates
- boulders

Infrastructure and community partners

Forty-two percent of councils reported that they partnered with others to deliver this infrastructure or services, with 40% reporting using CPTED principles in design and implementation.



Education



4 staff working on education (+33%)

0.5FTE total (+66%)

\$190,000 pa (+120%)



Enforcement staff



6 staff working on enforcement (+20%)

0.35FTE (+40%)

Cost \$185,000 pa. (+37%)



Incidents & Enforcement



3100 incidents (-27%)

1600 incidents removed by the offender (no change)

Education

Education and communication activities have broadly increased in response to community complaints and restricted abilities to enforce. This is a good example of certain councils being proactive in addressing litter and illegal dumping in the area.

Generally, education staff had strong internal links with Waste, Litter Prevention (dedicated teams), Customer service, Sustainability and Marketing teams within council. This remained unchanged from reporting in the 2019/20 survey.

As in the 2019/20 survey results, in 2020/21 education staff also identified having weak internal links to Parks, Media and Communications, Depot/ Cleansing/ Contractors, Recycling/ Waste centres and Local Laws teams.

Staffing

The 2020/21 survey identified a trend towards councils integrating enforcement and waste education teams. A higher recognition and response of the environmental contamination from enforcement teams was also observed.

Data showed a 20% increase from 2019/20 in staff employed in enforcement of illegal waste, with an increase of average total staff time spent on enforcement rising by 40% to 0.35FTE, with a total cost of \$185,000 per annum.

Generally, enforcement staff had strong internal links to Waste, Customer service, Depot/ Cleansing/ Contractors, Recycling/ Waste centre, Asset Protection and Parks teams in council.

Enforcement staff, however, had weak internal links with Environment/ Soil Contamination, Marketing, Media and Communications and Education teams in council.

Illegal waste incidents

The average council experienced 3,100 illegal waste incidents in the 2020/21 financial year – a decrease of 27%. One-thousand-six-hundred of these incidents were removed by the offender, and 1,500 incidents were removed by council.

Illegal waste enforcement

In 2020/21, the average council issued 90 infringements and referred one incident to the

**1500 incidents removed
by council
(-40%)**

90 infringements issued

**1 incident referred to
magistrates court**

Barriers to enforcement (staff)

- Time
- Internal processes
- Management attitude
- Obtaining evidence
- Surveillance

Top five personal concerns

- Authority and delegation
- DHHS interactions
- Resident interaction
- Generally low understanding
- Community perception

Magistrate Court, representing a slight drop from figures reported in 2019/20.

Barriers to enforcement

Training, roleplays and scenario-based workshops provided by WEAA have assisted in identifying and resolving previous challenges/ concerns of training, investigation knowledge and personal safety.

Top five challenges that were identified by local governments when enforcing illegal waste include:

- time
- internal processes
- management attitude
- obtaining evidence
- surveillance

Top five personal concerns authorised officers have when enforcing illegal waste include:

- authority and delegation
- DHHS interactions
- resident interaction
- generally low understanding
- community perception



Collection & disposal

**4 staff working on collection
and disposal
(+30%)**

0.5FTE (+25%)

\$1,260,000 (+66%)

Generally, collection and disposal staff had strong internal links to Litter Prevention, Customer Service and Local Laws teams working in council, which remained unchanged from 2019/20.

The weak internal links identified were Environment/ Soil Contamination, Parks, Depot/ Cleansing/ Contractors and Recycling/ Waste centres in Council.

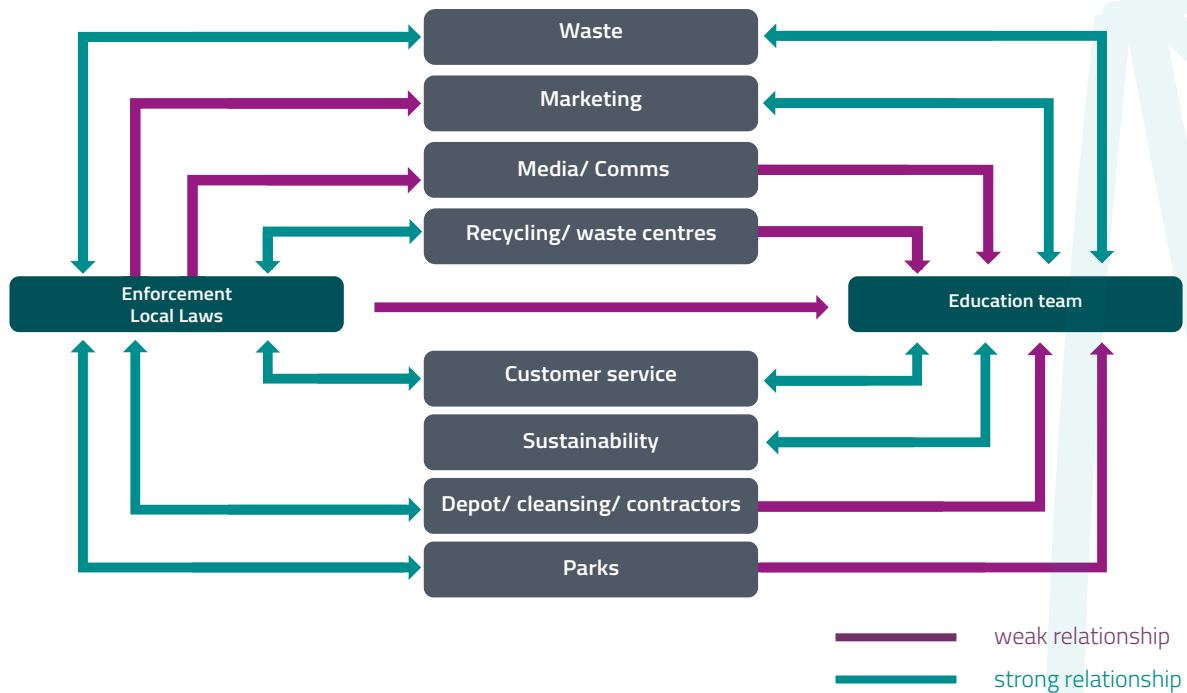
The average number of staff working on collection and disposal increased by 30%, with average total time spent collecting and disposing of illegal waste also increasing by 25% to 0.5FTE, with a total cost of \$1,260,000 per annum, including disposal.

Council internal relationships

The benefit of dedicating resources to illegal waste

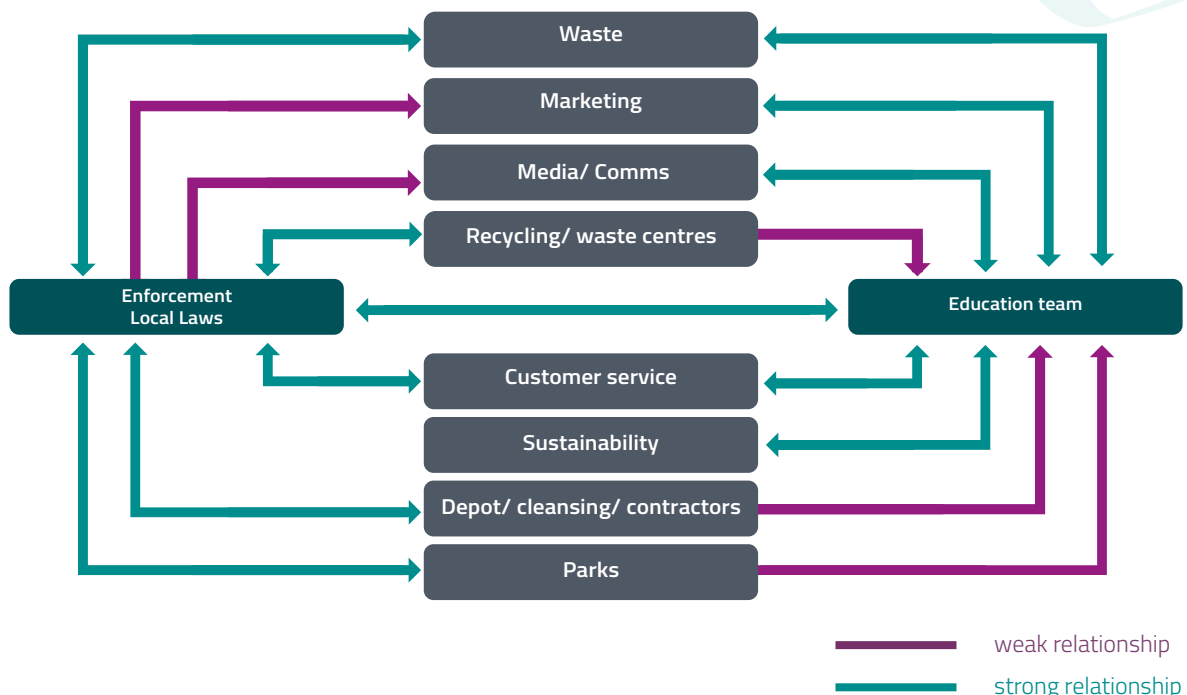
For councils without a dedicated litter prevention team or litter enforcement officer, internal relationships were often a barrier to effective education and enforcement to prevent illegal waste.

This was the most common internal relationship model seen in councils without a dedicated litter prevention team. Local laws or enforcement are disconnected from other council teams. This leads to more reactionary enforcement and reduced effectiveness of illegal waste prevention initiatives, if any.



The most common internal relationship model for councils with a dedicated litter prevention team was different.

Stronger relationships between the litter prevention team or dedicated officer with the education team facilitated connection to a variety of other council teams and enabled more effective illegal waste prevention initiatives.



Council external relationships

Councils reported working with 108 different parties who have been impacted by illegal waste.

The top 40 organisations councils work with are listed and the top four organisations shown.

List of organisations are ranked in order of those contacted most frequently.

ORGANISATIONS

1	Parks Victoria	13	DEPI	22	Victorian Prosecution Association	32	Fast food outlets
2	VicTrack	14	EPA	23	Aboriginal Victoria	33	MWRRG
3	DELWP	15	LGPRO	24	Body Corporates	34	North East Officers Association
4	Vicroads	16	MAV	25	Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust	35	Other charity stores
5	DHHS	17	Merri Creek Management Committee	26	Clean Up Australia	36	Park Lands Albury Wodonga Committee of Management
6	Melbourne Water	18	Planning Enforcement Officers Association	27	Colaban Water Authority	37	Private carparks
7	Metro Trains	19	Regional Roads Victoria	28	Contractors	38	Private Landowners
8	DoT	20	Saint Vincent De Paul Society Victoria	29	Crown Land	39	Private property owners
9	Victoria Police	21	South East Water	30	Developers	40	PTV
10	V-Line			31	Diachon		
11	ARTC						
12	Central Highlands Water						



Top four most frequently contacted organisations

CHANGES IN ILLEGAL WASTE 2020/21

The Illegal Waste Survey continues to provide robust and detailed data that benefits WEAA, state regulators and the Victorian government, assisting in taking actions to benefit our members while transitioning to a proactive educational based enforcement approach.

The survey data is used in real-world application, demonstrating the benefits of this network approach to the annual illegal waste survey.

Overall, 2020/21 survey data showed an increase in total expenditure, education, enforcement and collection and disposal, with a reduction in incidents and infrastructure and services.

In 2020/21, as the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world, the various lockdowns and restrictions enforced across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria affected the way people disposed of and treated waste.

Fifty percent of surveyed councils reported an increase in incidents of illegal waste, with equally similar number reporting a decrease. These councils were primarily metropolitan councils.

Officers reported that the community perceived an increase in waste during the period, with incidents of illegal waste receiving more reports than pre-COVID, as more people were active in local spaces during the travel restriction in place during the pandemic.

All councils reported higher traffic in public places, potentially triggered by more individuals working from home and accessing public places such as parks for their permitted outdoor activity. This phenomenon explains why residents perceived an increase in illegal waste while the number of incidents actually decreased by 27% in 2020/21.

However, unlawful deposit of illegal waste did continue during travel restrictions and COVID-19. Councils identified closed tips and reduced collections at charitable recyclers or clothing hubs as being real barriers that resulted in illegal waste in local communities, particularly in metropolitan areas with travel restrictions during COVID-19.

In combination, the data suggests that the distribution of dumping – or inappropriate disposal – has changed throughout the travel restrictions during COVID-19. Unlawful deposit of waste was reported and captured more in local communities, despite data indicating it decreased, as residents were spending more time in local public spaces. The cost of illegal waste increased during this time as the rise of dumped tyres and commercial operators unlawfully depositing waste placed significant stress on Local Government cleansing and collection budgets. This means the 2020/21 Annual Illegal Waste Survey has seen a shift from kerbside illegal dumping by residents to illegal dumping by commercial operators.

COVID-19 IMPACTS





OUTCOMES OF THE ANNUAL ILLEGAL WASTE SURVEY

Why we do it and what it has achieved

REGULATING LITTER AND OTHER WASTE TRAINING COURSE

In the last survey, members raised the need for further support in transitioning to the new *Environment Protection Act 2017* on 1 July 2021. WEAA – in collaboration with EPA Victoria – developed the “Regulating Litter and Other Waste” training course.

The training assists those authorised under the Environment Protection Act 1970 to transition to the Environment Protection Act 2017, providing clear instructions on what is contained in the new Act and how this will impact the real-life scenarios that authorised officers face on a daily basis.

Additionally, WEAA assisted EPA Victoria in developing their *Regulating Litter and Other Waste Toolkit*, which was adapted into a much more advanced scenario-based training course that culminated in a member training day attended by 120 litter enforcement officers from around Victoria.

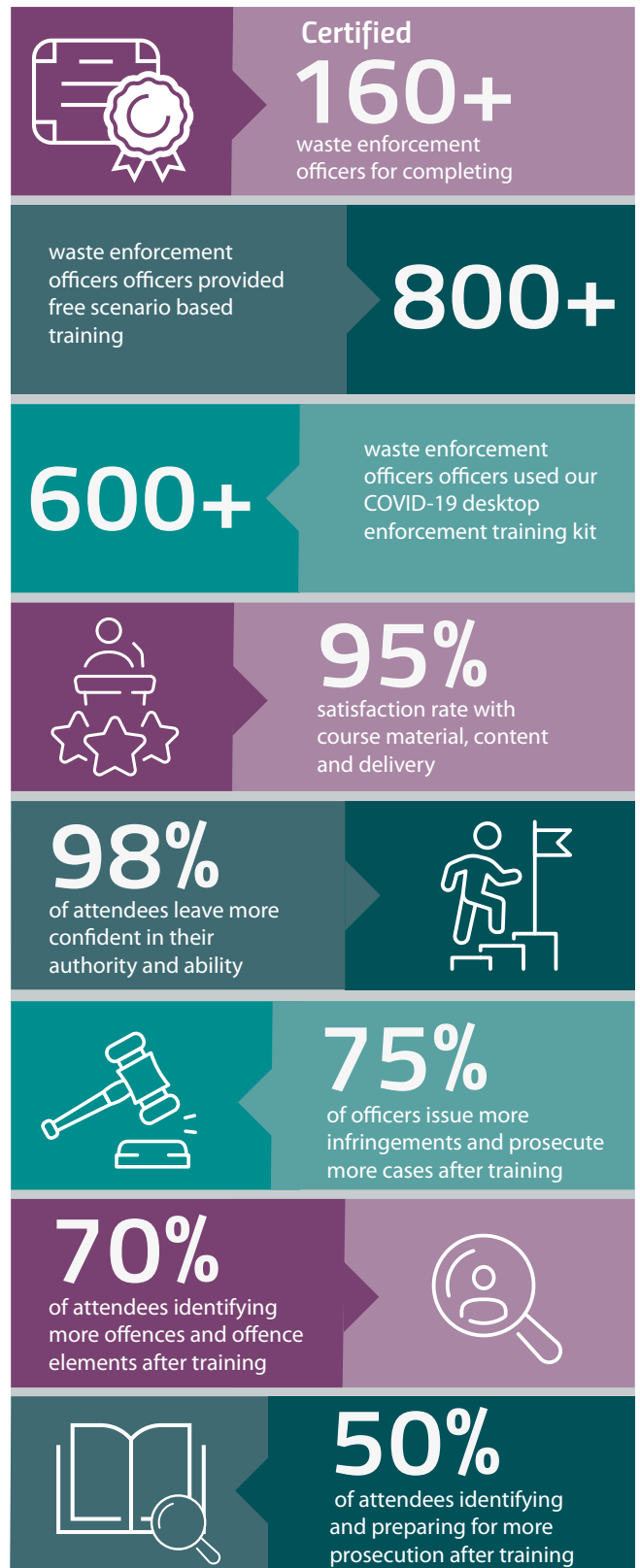
By bringing officers from many different regulators, the training event encouraged the sharing of intelligence and experience between councils, creating more effective enforcement procedures and processes.

Officers who attended the training event found it very informative and interesting and enjoyed being in the same room to discuss cases and hear how other officers interpret the legislation and what their processes are. Many officers reported that they will continue to use course materials in their field investigations.



Training objectives:

- Understand the main waste provisions in the Environment Protection Act 2017
- Understand everyday use of enforcement tools from part 6.3 of the Environment Protection Act 2017
- Understand methods to estimate volume and identify the appropriate offence



WEAA AND TYRE STEWARDSHIP AUSTRALIA SUPPORTING INVESTIGATIONS

In early 2022, Tyre Stewardship Australia (TSA) and WEAA joined forces to tackle illegal dumping and stockpiling of waste tyres in local environments, in response to the emerging trend of dumped tyres identified by the survey.

Each year, in Victoria alone, approximately 120,000 tonnes of tyres reach end of life. With the export ban on whole and baled tyres, there are concerns of increased tyre dumping in parks, creeks, leased factories or on private land.

By supporting the increase of intelligence exchange between organisations, litter enforcement officers stand to be better equipped to raise awareness of the issue in their local area.

In turn, TSA can learn from WEAA members' valuable local knowledge of emerging trends and rogue operators, which will help the organisation further develop sustainable outcomes for end-of-life tyres that work for everyone.

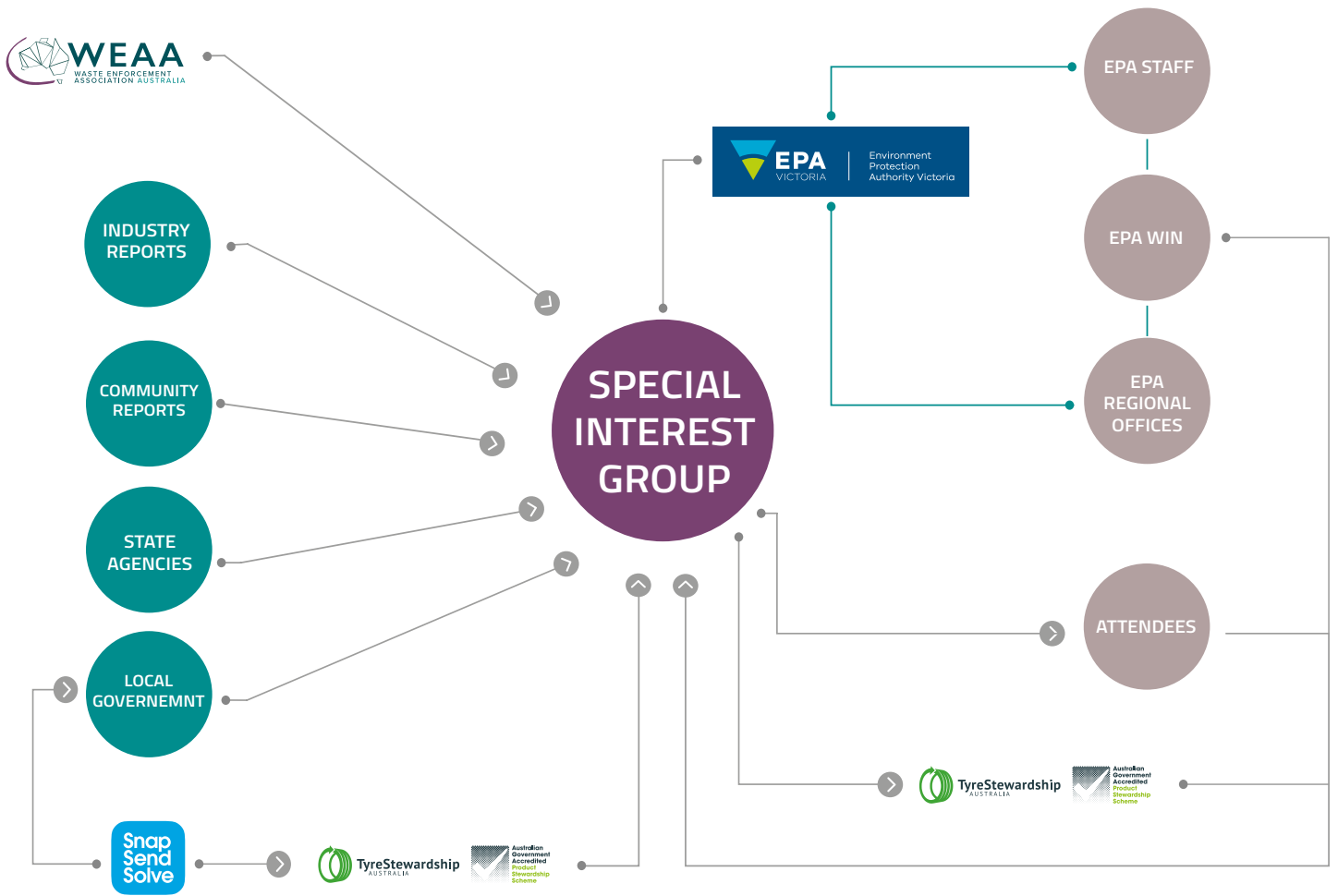
The partnership allows TSA to remain agile and act quickly on the intelligence provided by the litter enforcement officers, whilst creating a collaborative network between agencies, local government, organisations and community.

Communities, councils and regulators can support local WEAA members in tackling the tyre waste problem by:

- Using the 'dumped tyres' category in SNAPSENDSOLVE app to report tyre pollution
- Buying tyres from retailers accredited with TSA
- Using collectors and recyclers accredited with TSA



LEON and Tyre Stewardship Australia supporting investigations



CONCLUSION

Illegal waste is a pervasive problem that continues to affect Victorian councils, communities and the environment. To date, very little research or successful action has been provided beyond the local government level.

The WEAA survey continues to gather robust, real-time data of what is happening with Victorian local governments managing illegal waste.

Illegal waste expenditure to Victorian councils increased from \$88,967,000 in 2019/20 to \$148,160,00 in 2020/21. The survey noted a trend that illegal waste is moving away from kerbside residential dumping to commercial dumping of waste attributed to an increase in the amount of commercial and rogue operators depositing large amounts of waste unlawfully, resulting in increased collection costs for Local Government.

A better response using 'educational enforcement' was seen by councils that emphasised the importance of investigating illegal waste.

Albeit officers reported a decrease in illegal waste reports and community complaints, commercial operators and rogue waste collections were cited as the main sources of grievances, with tyre and green waste reported as the two predominant waste streams being illegally disposed.

Councils reported the top five challenges in responding to illegal waste as time, internal processes, management attitudes, evidence gathering and surveillance. Training, roleplays and scenario-based workshops provided by WEAA have assisted in addressing previous challenges/ concerns of training, investigation knowledge and personal safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic also changed the landscape of illegal waste and the community's perception of it increasing in their local areas.

Annual Illegal Waste Survey

WEAA continues in this important work to advocate for local government to state government to reduce the incidents, impact and damage that illegal waste causes.

This survey has achieved:

- baseline robust data on illegal waste for the majority of Victorian local governments
- confirmation of data that was previously anecdotal



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