

14 Clinical Waste Management

Council recognizes the need for a co-ordinate scheme for the handling, collection, storage, transport and disposal of clinical waste.

The Issues:

Sources of clinical waste in Townsville include public and private hospitals, medical and dental surgeries, nursing homes, funeral parlors, pathology labs, blood banks and veterinary clinics. Little specific, readily available information is available on the nature and exact types of waste generated, and can only be inferred from studies conducted in other regions. The disposal of clinical waste in Townsville is not an area, which has been widely researched, and current practices for managing it are unknown. . Although there are a number of approved, effective methods for the collection, transport and disposal of such wastes, there is no co-coordinated strategy operating in Townsville.

There are obvious implications for the health of residents and environmental health in general with this situation. The transient nature of the Townsville populace, together with the high numbers of interstate and overseas visitors, gives added importance to the need to deal effectively with issues of public health and the disposal of clinical waste to avoid the release of pathogens and spread of disease.

There is some comfort to be drawn from the fact that institutions needing to dispose of such waste are managed by well-educated, responsible professionals who are well aware of their responsibilities in this regard. However, given that required facilities may not be readily available and that there may be hazards involved of which there is little awareness, there is no reason not pursue "best practice" in the management of clinical waste. Additionally, there are wastes of a clinical nature generated by the community, which may be being disposed of inappropriately.

The objectives for managing Clinical Waste in Townsville are to:

- Establish baseline data on the types and volumes of clinical waste requiring disposal;
- Dispose of such wastes in a safe and environmentally acceptable manner; and,
- Ensure that all such wastes are being handled, transported and stored correctly.

Areas for Council Action:

To ensure the safe handling, collection, storage and disposal of clinical waste in Townsville, Council should consider the following actions:

Conduct a detailed investigation of current storage, collection, transportation and disposal methods being used. (ENV: WS: PD)

Investigate acceptable disposal practices to bring current methods in line with the rest of Queensland. (ENV: PD)

Improve and enforce existing Council requirements with respect to environmental health and clinical waste issues. (ENV)

Where appropriate, provide and encourage the use of facilities, which enable clinical waste to be managed in a responsible manner. (ENV: CS)

Areas for Community Action:

For advice on disposal of syringes, drugs or other medical materials ask your doctor, pharmacist or the Dept of Health.

Areas for Research:

The development of a comprehensive, integrated management strategy for dealing with clinical waste.

15 Hazardous Waste Management

Council recognizes the inadequacy of present hazardous waste management procedures and legislation in Queensland and the threat this situation poses to the environment and public health, and that this is further compounded in the north due to the lack of specialized facilities.

The Issues:

At present there are no secure landfills in north Queensland designed to accept hazardous waste, however the State government to locate a suitable site for a regional disposal facility is conducting investigations. There are currently interim hazardous waste measures in place to deal with the north's waste generation.

Council does not accept hazardous waste (chemicals or other such substances) at the Van tassel Street Sanitary Landfill unless it has been treated in compliance with guidelines set down by regulatory bodies.

The lack of regional facilities and costs and risks involved in transporting hazardous waste to existing facilities elsewhere inadvertently increases the risk that such waste will be disposed of illegally, resulting in environmental contamination and health problems. Where this is occurring, it is unlikely that the sources can be readily determined without detailed investigation and incentives for self-disclosure.

The objectives for managing Hazardous Waste are to:

Lobby the State Government for assistance in providing facilities within the region to deal with hazardous waste;

Develop a detailed information base on the hazardous waste issue in Townsville; and

Ensure the safe disposal of hazardous waste in line with environmental health guidelines.

Areas for Council Action:

To ensure Townsville is safe from the effects of hazardous substances contaminating the environment, the following actions should be considered:

The development of a comprehensive hazardous waste management strategy for Townsville. This strategy should include: land use planning; detailed cost analysis of disposal methods; detailed planning of waste disposal including public involvement; waste reduction, recycling of wastes, environmental considerations, secure landfill siting and alternative methods of disposal; and adoption of the principle that the polluter pays. (ENV: WS:PD:ENG)

An audit, involving all commercial and industrial businesses in Townsville, to detail the types and volumes of hazardous waste being produced and requiring disposal. (ENV :PD)

Maintenance of a register of businesses, which may be able to re-use or recycle wastes from other sectors. (ENV)

Encourage businesses to reduce the volumes of waste being produced or change to processes, which do not produce hazardous waste. (ENV)

Develop and distribute guidelines for the proper disposal of hazardous wastes. (ENV: PD)

Provide a service for householders to collect wastes such as unused chemicals and pesticides for safe disposal. (ENV)

Maintain a register of locations where hazardous wastes are or have been located, dumped or stored, and their nature and quantity. (ENV: PD)

Develop with other agencies a co-ordinate emergency response team to deal with hazardous chemical accidents. (ENV: ENG:OA)

Ensure that the relevant Council personnel are kept informed of the latest treatment technology and disposal practices to safeguard the environment. (ENV: ENG: WS)

Areas for Community Action:

Make a list of all the hazardous chemicals in your house, and ensure you are aware of the correct disposal and medical treatments for each of them.

When using chemicals, ensure you know how to safely use them and ascertain whether there is a less toxic alternative available to do the job. Refer to the "Green Consumer Guide" by Elkington and Hailes (1992) for alternatives.

Areas for Research:

The long term planning of hazardous waste management in north Queensland hinges on preventing the production of such wastes in the first instance and the siting of a secure disposal: area in the region. Interim hazardous waste procedures are already in place and are continually being reviewed. However the key to ensuring long term safety is in reducing the general hazardous wastes and educating all sectors and community about safe disposal.

16 Urban Development

Council recognizes the need to balance urban expansion with environmental and social objectives and to contain urban sprawl by using innovative planning and design strategies to ensure affordable housing of high amenity.

The Issues:

Urban development is an intensive, high value land use that tends to be favored by free market forces at the expense of other land uses. Farmland and natural environments will continue to be consumed by urban expansion unless environmentally sensitive planning can consolidate urban development and protect land with high environmental value.

Townsville is one of the major urban centers in Queensland. As the majority of the population live in the suburbs, the health and quality of life of residents is dependent on the quality of the urban environment.



Urban development will recognize the need to protect the dramatic landscape, which surrounds our City . . .

The historical trend to low-density housing (lithe quarter acre block") has exacerbated both urban expansion and dependence on private vehicles for transport. The latter leads to increased energy consumption and air pollution from vehicle emissions; the former leads to the situation found in southeast Queensland where the urban sprawl from different towns and cities has merged to consume most of the natural bush and agricultural land.

Council is soon to release its Strategic Town Plan, which addresses problems of strip development and rapid urban expansion. As such, this part of the Conservation Strategy should be read in conjunction with that document. The Australian Model Code for Residential Development (AMCORD) (Dept. of Industry and Commerce, 1990) is being assessed by



...as well as making it a more habitable place to live.

Council's Dept of Planning and Development with a view to incorporating relevant matters the Town Plan. The Code deals only with residential dwellings up to two stores in height with ground floor access, thus does not include flats or units.

AMCORD is a new approach to housing involving cost-effective and innovative approaches to building and land development. It promotes the concept of smaller allotment size where appropriate, and innovations in street design, kerbing, drainage, creative siting of buildings including zero lot lines and varied setbacks, shared service trenching and a rational use of open space and landscaping. Housing allotments are placed in cul-de-sacs and loop streets rather than along major roads to encourage greater human or recreational use to be made of the streets than is presently the case with grid-pattern road layout. The proposed Town Plan will allow for Model Code type development in new subdivisions, such as at Annandale and Douglas, to make more efficient use of urban land in Townsville. However, this type of development will need close supervision to ensure the result is a high amenity area, which provides a range quality, affordable housing choices.

A newly prepared document released for discussion is "AM CORD Urban" (Dept. of Housing, 1992) an extension of the AMCORD approach to planning. The aim of this document is to facilitate the supply of better, more appropriate inner-urban housing. It covers a wide variety of housing forms such as terraces, town houses, flats, apartments and housing on lots of 300 sq.m or less. In essence, the focus is on urban housing to three stories.

As well as the physical layout of new subdivision areas, there is a need to ensure that development in existing urban areas is of a character that is sympathetic to the surrounding environment, such as on hillsides and in historic precincts.

The environmental objectives of Urban Development in Townsville are to:

- Control the rate of growth of the urban sprawl;
- Provide high amenity, affordable housing opportunities; and,
- Ensure areas of ecological value and landscape interest are not consumed by other land-uses.

Areas for Council Action:

To facilitate environmentally responsible urban development, Council should consider the following actions:

- Adopt recommendations of the Australian Model Code for Residential Development. (PD)
- Conserve appropriate areas of open space and remnant vegetation in developing areas. (PD: ENV)
- Where appropriate, promote urban consolidation in developed areas. (PD: ENV)
- Develop and promote a performance standard for streetscapes to include recommendations for footpath plantings, advertising and signage, traffic density and human space needs of street users. (PD: ENV: ENG)
- In new developments, incorporate pedestrian and cycle paths to link neighborhoods with commercial centers as part of a wider Bicycle Strategy. (PD)
- Ensure areas of high conservation value are accommodated in the Strategic Town Plan. (ENV: PD)

Develop a Landscape Policy supporting the Town Plan, which covers the residential, commercial and industrial landscape, and which also, defines the landscape character of different precincts in Townsville (including Magnetic Is and surrounding hillsides). (ENV: PD)

Monitoring by professional landscape architects of the implementation of Council-approved landscape designs. (ENV: PD)

Promote the landscape policy to already established commercial and industrial areas to enhance their amenity and to promote a unified coherent landscape. (ENV: PD)

Encourage businesses to improve the amenity of their areas by running annual awards, perhaps judged by customers and the community. (ENV)

Areas for Community Action:

- Provide feedback to Council via the "Council in the Suburbs" meetings in your area. For information ring the Council.
- Try to plan buildings and gardens so that they blend with, rather than oppose, the surrounding landscape.

Areas for Research:

- Development of a landscape protection and streetscape strategy for Townsville.
- Means of integrating natural area conservation objectives with urban development.