



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Transport
and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the provision of municipal services in Canberra

Submission number: 009

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Submission to ACT Legislative Assembly's Transport and City Services Committee, December 2025

Purpose:

The purpose of this submission is to inform the committee about illegal dumping in a residential suburban setting in Canberra –

1. the frustrations of residents caused by lack of timely intervention;
2. remedies suggested that do not address the causes;
3. the unique nature of unit complexes;
4. cost sharing and community involvement; and
5. possible solutions to help residents manage this problem in partnership with Territory Government municipal services to disrupt and deter this practice in Canberra.

Background:

- Over the last few years, illegal dumping has occurred on the nature strip outside **10 Wilkins St MAWSON, ACT 2607**. Up until May this year it was infrequent and small in size.
- In May 2025 the illegal dumping recommenced as the material dumped quickly grew in size. *Please refer to Annexure 1 - Photo No.1*. Used syringes were also found in the illegal dump and local children were exploring it for ‘treasures’.
- My Body Corporate of unit complex at this address took the decision to remove the illegally dumped household waste at our own cost (once again) because it was unsightly; hazardous to residents, walkers, children (e.g. used syringes and sharp edges) and road users and the environment. It also contained mattresses and tyres. Some loose material was thrown onto the street by people who had little regard for safety consequences.
- In the meantime, we had reported the illegal dumping to “*Fix my Street*” seeking cameras and signs as a long term solution.
- Within days of the nature strip being cleared by our Body Corporate’s contractor, the illegal dumping started all over again.
- City Services did send a representative to inspect the site in June 2025 and canvass the neighbourhood. I met him and was assured that cameras and signs would be installed as we both inspected the best locations around the nature strip.
- Unfortunately, nothing was heard from City Services after their inspection.
- Ironically, our unit complex had organised a bulky waste removal in early July and we had advised the contractors (JJ Richards) that our bulky waste collection was located inside our unit complex and not to mistakenly remove the growing illegally dumped material on the nature strip. Despite clear instructions, JJ Richards removed the illegally dumped material by mistake and not our legitimate bulky waste!
- Nevertheless, in a month or so, the illegal dumping recommenced once again!
- Frustrated with a lack of response from City Services, I contacted local MLAs to explain what had been happening which triggered several email communications

and promises from some of them to follow-up the matter with the Minister responsible.

- I finally received advice via Minister Paterson from Minister Cheyne that City Services were not installing cameras and mentioned matters in their report which I identified were fundamentally incorrect (e.g. wrong address and we had no CCTV cameras on sight). It appeared to be a ‘rushed’ report with no quality assurance in my opinion. I was informed by Minister Paterson that City Services had advised that they could not justify the need to install cameras because it would be impossible to monitor with all the people and vehicle traffic, but we should install them instead! There was no mention about installing signs, as promised.
- I believed at that time nothing more was intended to be implemented to deter illegal dumpers at our location.
- Not satisfied with City Services response, I have continued to seek remedies and action through representations to our local MLAs.
- Once again, after JJ Richards’ mistaken removal of the illegally dumped household waste, the illegal dumping recommenced about 6 weeks later. ***Please refer to Annexure 1 - Photo No.2*** attached showing the state of the current illegal dumping as at **3 December 2025**.
- Finally on 3 December, I received an email from “Fix My Street” which was curious. Inter alia, it simply said:

“We are pleased to advise that we have investigated your request, and the litter/illegal dumped material/s have been referred to Place Management team for removal. We have provided information on Illegal Dumping, including penalties, and have provided requests for information to all nearby properties. We will continue to monitor this area. Your request has now been closed through [Fix My Street](#)”

- On the same day, I received in my letterbox an “*A Request for Information*” from *Licensing and Compliance – City & Environment* which was seeking any evidence of identifying culprits and the penalties involved. It was recognised that the nature strip outside our address was “*where re-occurring illegal dumps have been located*”. It confirms the second sentence of the advice aforementioned had been implemented.
- On 4 December, the current illegally dumped material was removed.
- We now wait for the illegal dumping to recommence, once again and the frustration will continue.

The Issues:

Simply, the key issue for **10 Wilkins St, Mawson** is illegal dumping at our address has become a haven for anyone who wants to illegally dispose of their household goods. The location in an area that is blind to our unit residents, it is in a street which has heavy traffic during the day (not at night) so the illegal dump site is obvious to many and then to some of those who see an opportunity to rid themselves of unwanted household goods. I found that

most illegal dumping activities occur between 11pm and dawn from my close observations on a daily basis.

However, on a larger scale, one of the consequences of higher density living (and this is growing rapidly in Canberra e.g. to help deal with supply issues) is that unit complexes have little or no storage space for their unwanted household items. Multiply this with:

1. much lower overall per capita space availability than Torrens title house properties;
2. a greater transient population (renters tend to dispose of excess household items when moving in and out);
3. ignorance of the laws and/or just considering the benefits of illegal dumping outweighs the chances of being caught (it becomes someone else's problem!);
4. many unit residents do not have family support, appropriate vehicles or funds to afford separate collections;
5. Body Corporates and Strata Managers can be at fault in not planning to undertake the Government's annual bulky waste collection to reduce this problem (Of course many residents cannot wait for 12 months, if they need to dispose of it quickly because there is nowhere else to put it!)

There is no question why the frequency of residential illegal dumping is more likely to be around neighbourhoods with unit complexes nearby. Just look around Wilkins Street, Mawson and nearby streets, at the moment.

Other issues are:

- It has taken 7 months of continued communication with government and we still do not have a long term remedy other than stop gap actions that doesn't solve long term illegal dumping. It is like a doctor telling a patient that they need an important appendectomy to remove the infected appendix and a week's rest afterwards. All that happens is that the patient has a week's rest!
- I have noticed that this problem has recently spread to unit complexes and houses in the area (in smaller doses) which it seems to reflect illegal dumping 'virus' is spreading in our neighbourhood (as already reflected earlier).
- Clearly this is an ongoing problem, not just in Wilkins St, Mawson. Health, environmental and other risk hazards occur when materials are illegally dumped. Measures need to be explored that would be useful to help residents to **disrupt** and **deter** illegal dumping at any time.
- Many residents (houses and units) use the nature strip to sell items like cars and refrigerators, or just give them away for free. This activity appears acceptable in our community, but is it legal? Whether it is legal or not, it blurs the illegal dumping issue because it is not clear to residents about the legal status of this activity while most know the dumping is illegal. Has the item been illegally dumped or a resident wanting to give away a useful household item? This in itself can 'mask' illegal dumping under the guise of 'accepted community practice' as a problematic overlap.

- Managing behaviour and reinforcing values – probably underpins everything said in this submission. The right balance needs to be struck. At the moment, illegal dumping is winning!

Possible Solutions:

There is no ‘*silver bullet*’ to rid our community of illegal dumping. However, the Government should be “**partnering**” with local residents to implement a range of help guides and solutions. There is an old saying that “laws only keep honest people honest”, so there has to be some visible “**deterrence**” to remind people about illegal activities; and some “**disruptive**” actions to minimise opportunities for others to exploit. The following are some suggested approaches:

- Erect “*Do not Illegally Dump*” and/or “*Report Illegal Dumping (RID)*” or “*Smile for the Camera*” signs in areas where this is an ongoing problem. (**Deterrence**)
- Erect “dummy” cameras with signs that state: “surveillance is being undertaken” for recurrent illegal activities. (**Disruptive**). Only use real cameras where the issue is severe enough to cause major risk to residents. If monitoring is a problem in the agency, ask local residents about who would volunteer to review footage and report evidence maintaining their anonymity to the public.
- Residents need to be able to track “*Fix My Street*” progress so that they know what is happening and they can contact the agency which is currently handling the current status of their issue. Government agencies should be working for the community and not hide behind shadows of anonymity. (**Partnering**)
- Since most illegal dumping is on nature strips, the Government should be able to recommend to residents solutions that may help (**Deterrence and Partnering**):
 - Build gardens or plant bushes that do not interfere with underground or overhead infrastructure – and consider providing some minor grants to assist in the costs, by application;
 - Remove vegetation or useless obstructions that provides better line of sight to the nature strip from residences without government ‘red tape’ preventing or stalling the removal;
 - Install cameras (best locations for illegal dumping identification), list of accredited CCTV camera installers to choose from, and again consider providing minor grants to assist in the costs by application – privacy issues may need to be considered and advised by government;
- Have ‘ready-made’ neighbourhood notices that can be downloaded and distributed by concerned residents about illegal dumping in their area. These notices would contain all the relevant Acts and penalties. (**Disruptive and Partnering**)
- Increase patrols at night to check on hot spot sites to complement or substitute for live cameras and signs. (**Deterrence and Disruptive**)
- Install movement sensors for red lights in an area that is attracting illegal dumping that does not cover road traffic unless required. This would be a temporary measure. (**Disruptive**).

- Increase the penalties for individuals caught illegally dumping. (**Deterrence**) The notice residents at our unit complex received on 3 December is misleading because it mentions a maximum penalty of \$1,500 and separately \$7,500 under the *Litter Act 2004*. The former amount is not a deterrent, in my opinion.
- I understand the booking for free Bulky Waste removal allows 2 cubic metres per unit in the complex more than once during the year to a maximum numbers of units annually and must be arranged through the Strata Manager. Houses are allowed 2 cubic metres annually (only about a size of a 2 seater couch!). While a house resident knows how much it needs to have collected, a unit complex has many households and therefore does not know and has no ready solution to determine quantities to be removed beforehand. Mostly, it is a pure guess. Therefore, it is recommended that the Bulky Waste booking system be reviewed to consider:
 - a bi-annual collection for unit complexes using set months(s) that allows the Strata Manager to book and select the cubic meterage (not identify unit numbers);
 - unless the request is made by the Strata Manager or Body Corporate Manager giving a month's notice of the month being due, the booking lapses;
 - if the Unit complex requires an urgent collection between months, then a fee of \$500 would apply for up to 20 cubic metres and a graduated scale for larger volumes required for disposal.

The purpose of this recommendation is to reduce the need for illegal dumping intervention, because there would be more certainty of collection timeframes and opportunities to deal with urgent disposals. It allows the Strata Manager and Body Corporate to plan and educate their residents about disposing of unwanted household items. (**Partnering**)

I hope this submission is considered by the committee. I am happy to discuss this issue with the committee in person, if required.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit it.

Stuart McPherson

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Annexure 1

Photo No. 1 – taken in June 2025



Photo 2 – taken on 3 December 2025

