

# Fact Sheet

# Stop the Stink

## Community Meeting



**Council shares the community's frustration and disgust in response to nuisance waste odours that have been impacting residents for many years.**

**Council and the community have raised significant concerns about the negative impacts of strong odours emanating from private waste operators. While these odours have been an ongoing nuisance for Ipswich residents for many years, the current odour affecting homes around the Swanbank area has been particularly strong in recent months.**

### Who is responsible for dealing with odour?

- Ultimately, local commercial waste operators who are likely generating these odours. Sites should be operated in compliance with all regulatory approvals, and in a manner which protects the community and the environment.
- The Queensland Government's Department of Environment and Science (DES) is responsible for the monitoring and investigation of Environmental Approvals, including matters of environmental harm and environmental nuisance. This includes waste odours.
- The Environmental Approval conditions deal with almost all environmental issues including the types of waste accepted at the facility, how it's processed and how the site is to be managed to protect the environment.
- Council is responsible for the monitoring and investigation of compliance with Planning Approval conditions. Planning Approval conditions include hours of operation, layout of the site, the standard of construction of internal and external infrastructure and some site operation matters which generally don't relate to odour issues.
- Council continues to liaise with DES officers and other areas of the Queensland Government, on behalf of the Ipswich community, to raise nuisance odour complaints and other issues as they arise.

### Odour Abatement Taskforce

- The Queensland Government's Department of Environment and Science formed the Odour Abatement Taskforce (the Taskforce) in 2018 to investigate nuisance odour complaints, determine cause where possible and consider enforcement as necessary.

- The Taskforce is a specialist team of officers who follow up on complaints regarding odour, dust, and other environmental issues, reported through DES, in the Ipswich area.
- Since the inception of the Taskforce in 2018, more than 25,000 complaints have been made to the Queensland Government on nuisance odours and related environmental issues.
- The data collected by the Taskforce is critical in helping narrow down odour sources and identify potential solutions to this complex problem. Reporting each and every time you experience an odour is strongly encouraged, even if you have reported before.
- Report data is paired with weather information, with an objective of identifying the odour source.

### Cleanaway Cell 3B Odour

- During the 2022 floods, a large volume of water accumulated in a landfill cell (known as Cell 3B). The water became contaminated with wastes from the site releasing a strong 'rotten egg' odour which impacted several surrounding suburbs.
- Council and the community called for the Queensland Government to take strong action against Cleanaway, culminating in a Stop the Stink meeting on 10 April 2022.
- Council also resolved to write to the Health Minister and Queensland Health seeking a public health enquiry to be undertaken to explore the negative health impacts being caused by this odour.
- This was ultimately refused by the Queensland Government. However, Cleanaway were charged with a number of offences in relation to its New Chum facility, including wilfully causing an environmental nuisance.
- The odour issues at Cleanaway's Cell 3B site have been abated following the actions of DES.
- While the Queensland Government announced its intention to direct Cleanaway to close and rehabilitate Cell 3B, it has since proposed conditions which will allow Cleanaway to resume landfilling activities at this cell. This matter is ongoing.

## What has council done to address the waste issue?

- We have taken significant steps to transition Ipswich away from outdated landfill practices and to a more environmentally appropriate and community-friendly approach to waste.
- Council established a Waste and Circular Economy Transformation Policy Directive in December 2020 to outline our commitment to delivering a better outcome for Ipswich and its residents.
- Under the Directive, council has returned glass to residents' yellow top bins, which allows these items to be recycled and reused.
- Council has established a dedicated Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) collection program, which will become part of our core bin service from next year.
- Upgrades are already underway to council's existing recycling and refuse centres to improve our ability to recover and recycle materials which would otherwise end up in landfill.
- Next year, council will introduce a new annual on-demand kerbside collection service which will divert up to 80 per cent of materials recovered away from landfill.
- Council is also working in partnership with Logan and Redland councils to construct its own Materials Recovery Facility at Browns Plains, boosting our resource recovery and lessening our reliance on private waste companies to deliver this service.
- In line with the Directive, both council and the community have advocated strongly to the Queensland Government to halt a proposal from Remondis to establish a waste incinerator in Ipswich as well as a proposed new Wanless landfill site at Ebenezer.

## Ipswich City Council Court Action

- Council has refused applications from Lantrak, Cleanaway and Austin BMI seeking to either establish new or expand existing landfill sites in Ipswich.
- All three companies appealed council's decisions in the Planning and Environment Court, costing council around \$7 million in legal fees to defend its decision to not allow more landfill in Ipswich.
- Subsequently, the Planning and Environment Court upheld council's decision with two of these appeals dismissed. The third (Austin BMI) was successful but will be conditioned more appropriately.
- While it is disappointing that council cannot recoup the legal costs to defend its decisions, this outcome is a significant win for the community and sends a strong message to the waste industry.

## What can the community do?

- While it may be a frustrating exercise, council strongly encourages residents to continue to report all odours to the Taskforce.
- This sends a strong signal to the Queensland Government that waste odours are a real and ongoing issues for Ipswich residents, and strong action is required to ensure waste operators are doing the right thing.
- If you feel odours are causing health problems, it is recommended that you discuss this with your health practitioner. Your local health provider can then escalate these reports to Queensland Health for further investigation.

## Not all operators create issues in the community

- It is important to note that while there are waste operations that are likely causing odour issues, there are equally waste operators across the city that coexist alongside the community and provide a critical service to the community.
- Whilst this situation is extremely frustrating, it is important that we recognise that some waste and resource recovery operators manage their sites and their operations to protect the community and comply with regulations. Some of these operators also invest back into the community and make efforts to build social licence.
- Council strongly believes all operators should comply with approvals, protect our community, contribute productively to our economy and help the community deal with the waste we generate.

## How do I report a nuisance odour?

Submit an online odour nuisance report via the Odour Abatement Taskforce website or call 1300 130 372 (Option 3).

## Further Information

For further information on these topics or any other council matters, contact Mayor Harding or your local Divisional Councillors at [mayor@ipswich.qld.gov.au](mailto:mayor@ipswich.qld.gov.au) or (07) 3810 6011.