



Operation DBAD

DON'T BE A DUMPER

2024/25 PROGRESS REPORT

Executive summary

Illegal dumping remains a significant environmental issue across the Northern Territory, with Alice Springs identified as a major hotspot. In response to increasing public concern, Operation: Don't Be a Dumper (DBAD) was [launched in November 2024](#) as the first coordinated cross-agency initiative to address the problem through prevention, deterrence, education, and enforcement.

This status report outlines the key achievements and outcomes from Operation DBAD in the reporting period of July 2024 to December 2025.

In 2024–25, aerial surveys detected nearly 2,500 historical dumping sites and ten major hotspots, while a community survey of over 200 residents highlighted key drivers of illegal dumping in the region.

Actions included a large-scale community clean-up at Ellery Drive that removed over 2.2 tonnes of waste and restricted vehicle access, and increased camera surveillance and drone monitoring efforts under the NT EPA run Crimson Camera program.

Early results are promising – with cleanup sites remaining largely clear of illegal dumping throughout 2025, and several ongoing illegal dumping investigations from known hotspots around Alice Springs.

DBAD aims to build on its successes from 2024/25 period and further expand the program in 2026.



Background

Illegal dumping is a significant problem across the Northern Territory and in recent years has become particularly apparent around Alice Springs. Incidents of illegal dumping are regularly reported to the Alice Springs Town Council, Parks and Wildlife (Department of Tourism and Hospitality), the Environment Division of the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (DLPE) and the NT EPA Pollution Response Line.

In response to increasing public concern, Operation: Don't Be A Dumper (DBAD) was [launched in November 2024](#) – marking the beginning of the first cross agency response to illegal dumping in the Northern Territory.

Objectives

DBAD aims to reduce illegal dumping through prevention, deterrence, education and enforcement activities. As outlined in the DBAD Project Plan (2024), the overarching strategy is broken up into six key outputs:



1. Project governance

We will establish strong governance with the right stakeholders to ensure success.



2. Understand the nature and scale of the problem

We will identify where illegal dumping is occurring and what wastes are being dumped.



3. Identify the cause

We will understand what's causing the problem.



4. Remediate existing dumping

We will target remedial efforts to address areas identified in Output 2.



5. Prevention and deterrence

We will prevent and deter future dumping.



6. Monitoring

We will measure and monitor the effectiveness of the strategy to inform continuous improvement.

Members

DBAD is a partnership between Alice Springs Town Council, the Northern Territory Government, the NT EPA and Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation – and we're always looking for opportunities to connect with and expand DBAD to include other interested community groups.



2024/25 activity overview

Mapping data

Prior to the official launch of DBAD in November 2024, the Environmental Regulation team conducted a massive survey of historical aerial imagery (2011–2024) around Alice Springs. Nearly 2,500 instances of illegal dumping were detected in the survey, and ten “hotspots” of illegal dumping activity were identified.

[Illegal Dumping Hotspot maps can be seen here.](#)

The ten hotspots have become the focus of DBAD operations, which has allowed the team to allocate resources where they'll have the most impact.

Community cleanup day

On 2 March 2025, Alice Springs residents and DBAD members came together for a [successful community clean-up day](#). The clean-up focused on a hotspot area identified in the aerial imagery analysis, located at the Ellery Drive monitoring site. Over 2,200 kg of waste was removed by volunteers and contractors, and gates and boulders were installed by Crown Lands and Alice Springs Town Council to restrict vehicle access to the area, while still allowing pedestrian access.

Marking an important milestone for DBAD, the Ellery Drive monitoring site remains clear of any significant illegal dumping by the end of 2025, in contrast to similar sites with unrestricted vehicle access.

Community survey

As a part of Output 3 of DBAD, the team ran a public survey (14 January to 24 March 2025) to collect local knowledge and gauge community concerns about illegal dumping from the Alice Springs population. The survey saw participation from over 200 respondents, providing a diverse cross-section of the Alice Springs community.

The biggest take away message of the survey was the perceived main causes of the illegal dumping problem in Alice Springs – difficulties in legal disposal, and a lack of meaningful consequences for those who illegally dump.

[Click here to read the full survey results.](#)

We have been using this information to guide our actions and make clear decisions on how to proceed – including the ramping up of hotspot surveillance activities in response to community feedback and making reporting pathways clearer for the public.

Surveillance activities

Coming off the results of the community survey, August 2025 marked the start of an intensive surveillance program around illegal dumping hotspots - with over 80 hotspot inspections between August and December 2025. Code named "[Crimson Camera](#)", this program has spawned 25 investigations for the reporting period and aims to continue that trend into 2026.

Compliance and enforcement actions

Of the 25 investigations that were initiated and closed during this reporting period, DBAD has achieved a range of meaningful regulatory outcomes. All incidents are investigated in line with the [Environmental Regulation Division Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#), and are done in alignment with the [Environmental Regulation Division PACTT principles](#).

During the early stages of the Crimson Camera surveillance program (September – December 2025), a total of nine cases progressed to a clear regulatory resolution, reflecting active compliance management and targeted enforcement.

This included:

Two penalty infringement notices (PINs) were issued to individuals in response to more serious or clearly evidenced offences, both offenders were made to clean up and dispose of the waste legally.

Four cases that resulted in the issuing of educational letters. These were issued only to individuals who were not directly involved in illegal dumping activities, which focused on guiding community members toward better waste-disposal practices and an understanding of the problem.

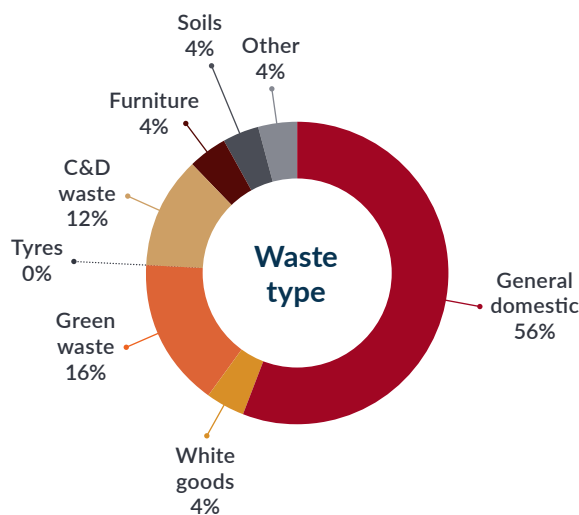
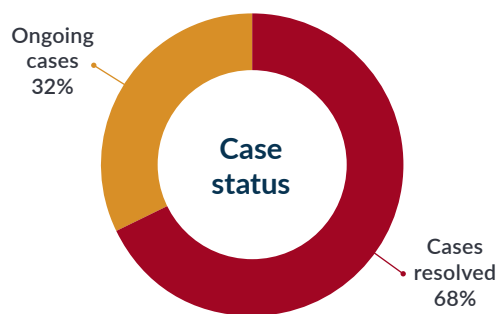
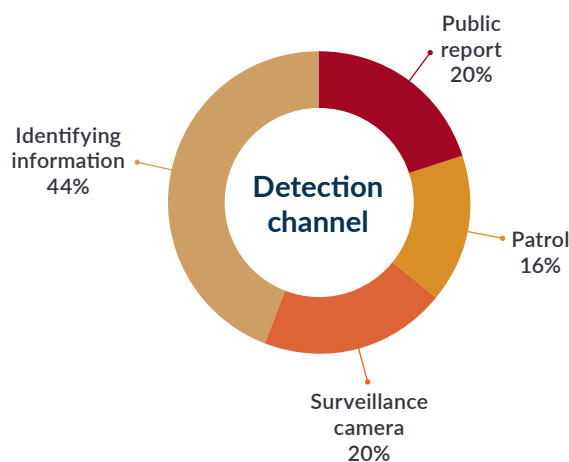
Two official warnings issued to individuals who were caught littering and made amends or were found to have cleaned the waste voluntarily prior to officers getting involved. These letters were aimed at preventing further non-compliance.

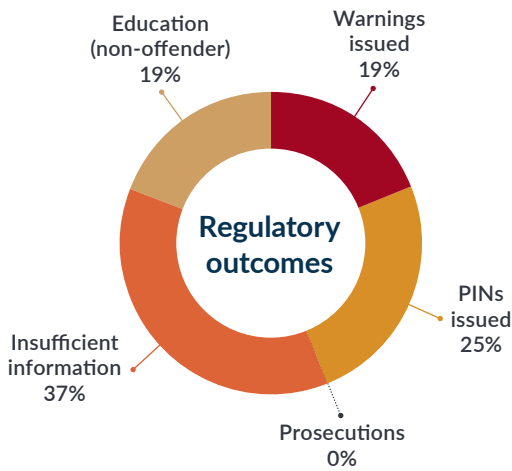
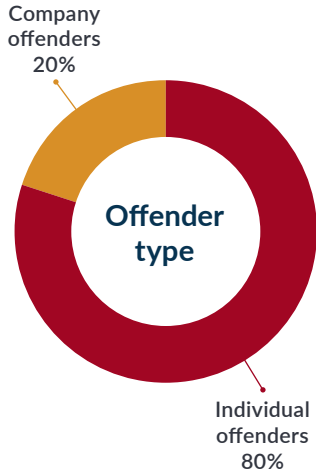
One case was referred to Alice Springs Town Council for further investigation.

The remaining cases were either closed due to insufficient information inhibiting investigation efforts or are listed as ongoing.

All investigations by Environmental Regulation officers that have resulted in PINs and/or prosecutions are published in the [NT EPA Annual Report](#) at the end of each financial year.

A breakdown of cases during this period can be found below:





Drone operations

As a part of Output 6 of DBAD, the DLPE Environmental Regulation team committed to drone surveillance and monitoring of several hotspots identified in the Output 2 aerial survey. The 2024/25 period saw seven monitoring flights take place above active dumping hotspots and has helped identify freshly dumped waste that would otherwise be invisible from the road.

The results of the drone operations are helping to inform the effectiveness of any deterrence measures put in place as the project progresses.

Early signs of success

Both the Ellery Drive and Lovegrove Drive survey sites have remained free of illegal dumping throughout 2025, indicating that limited restriction of vehicle access in high-risk areas plays a pivotal role in reducing instances of illegal dumping.

Notably, the Lovegrove Drive site has remained clean for over a year now, marking a significant milestone for DBAD.

2026 forecast

Looking forward, DBAD will continue to build on its early successes. With the expansion of the Crimson Camera surveillance program and drone monitoring program to cover additional dumping hotspots, DBAD aims to increase its regulatory presence as supported by the NT EPA and the Alice Springs Town Council.

Community engagement and education will remain a central focus of DBAD, with additional community cleanup days expected to be announced in early 2026.

Comparative waste data (%)

