SAFE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL OF IMPROPERLY DISCARDED SHARPS

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Documents superseded	
Related Documents	NSW Health- Community Sharps Management Guidelines for NSW Councils WHS Act 2012 BSC WHS Policy
Relevant delegations	
Responsible Directorate	
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Objectives

This policy aims to maintain high standards of workplace safety, public health and safety, and environmental management through effective management of the disposal of community sharps. This is achieved by:

- Providing guidelines for the procedure of safe collection and disposal of improperly discarded sharps for Council employees.
- Providing guidelines for advice to the general public on the safe collection and disposal of improperly discarded sharps.
- Encouraging broad community participation in the safe disposal of community sharps by providing and promoting accessible community sharps disposal options.
- Reducing the potential for needle stick injuries to occur by providing information, training, personal protective equipment and responsive management.
- Providing mechanisms for the effective management of sharps in the community to maximise appropriate community sharps disposal.

Scope

This policy applies to the whole community and the entire Brewarrina Shire Local Government Area.

General Provisions

Council will work in partnership with the community and other stakeholders to:

- Provide and maintain high standards of public and workplace health and safety that comply with or exceed the requirements of all relevant legislation, through the effective management of community sharps.
- Provide services and infrastructure that maximise appropriate community sharps disposal and minimise the potential for needle stick injuries to occur to workers, community members, or visitors.
- Regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of objectives, strategies and actions for the management of community sharps.
- Specific training to be delivered to staff responsible for the collection of improperly disposed of sharps.

Introduction

Sharps are devices used to penetrate the skin and include needles, syringes and lancets. Community sharps are generated in a wide range of non-clinical situations, including residential and commercial property, public areas and public facilities.

Inappropriate disposal may represent a risk to Council employees, contractors, the community, and the environment.

Under legislation “sharps waste” is a type of hazardous clinical waste as defined in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. As community sharps waste does not fall specifically within this definition it comes under the definition of “solid waste.” Council is responsible for the proper management and disposal of solid waste.

Infectious diseases can be spread by infected needles and other which sharps cut or pierce the skin. Therefore, Council employees in the course of their duty must follow procedures to minimise the risk of infection to themselves and others from such objects. The general public should also be given similar advice as to the procedure for handling and disposing of sharps found discharged improperly in the community.

Definitions

“Sharps”:
For the purposes of this policy “sharps” means objects or devices having sharp points or edges capable of cutting or piercing the skin.

This definition includes hypodermic needles, scalpels, cut throat razors, broken ampoules and any like thing or object.

“Improperly discarded”:
For the purposes of this Policy “improperly discarded” means where sharps are found in any places or situation other than within a domestic waste receptacle or other waste receptacle or disposal bins and in appropriate sharps containers on land in Crown ownership and control, Local Government owned and vested land and land in private ownership.

Collection

- Sharps should be disposed of at the site of collection into a suitable container which should be puncture resistant and shatter proof.

- A suitable container is a rigid plastic container with a secure lid (preferably screw top) and identified as a sharps disposal container.

- All staff responsible, and who are trained in the collection of sharps, should carry suitable sharps safe containers at all times in the Council vehicles.

Problem Areas

In identified problem areas, Council’s Environmental Health Team will investigate the installation of appropriate disposal bins and any other strategies appropriate to address the problem and the cost of the disposal collection and disposal will be funded from the waste management accounts.