



SEDIMENT TASK FORCE - FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

WHODUNNIT? - THE MYSTERY OF ESCAPING SEDIMENT



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



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Whodunnit?

The Mystery of Escaping Sediment...



The Problem with Enforcement

Ensuring compliance by land developers and builders with Local Laws and other erosion and sediment control regulations often proves a challenging task for Local Government Officers.

This is because the current management of sediment problems is reactive – the escape event has already happened and is often only discovered when sediment causes a blockage in the stormwater system or has passed through it into environmental waterways.

Because our stormwater systems are a shared resource servicing large areas, finding the source is a complicated task.

Local Government officers can only act when erosion, the dumping of sand, surface runoff or sand drift is witnessed, or when there is only one site under construction in that street or area, which is rarely the case.

This is made even more difficult after a subdivision has been completed, as commitments made in the developer's site management plan needs to be understood and followed by all of the various trades and contractors entering the site (now individual lots). This can result in a range of risk factors from earthworks, vehicle maneuvering, scaffolding and material storage.

For enforcement to be successful, Local Government officers are required to document evidence (observation, photographs or video) to prove the origin of the sediment/sand/dust.

This task is resource intensive without guaranteed outcomes, and local governments risk being perceived as punitive or anti-development. These real-world factors, including the wide variety of other duties and resourcing limitations, have made enforcement and infringement a lower priority.

The Sediment Task Force understands that local governments are not the 'environment police', so we're looking at ways to stop the problem before it happens, by *Keeping Soil on Site*.

Making this Easier

A) Authorised Officers Training

Local Government Officers can become Authorised Officers under sections 87 and 88 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 (EP Act), which allows them to act to prevent discharges into the environment which cumulatively can cause harm.

This authority and training can assist Local Government Officers to manage soil erosion and water borne sediment runoff from construction sites when monitoring for compliance, investigating alleged breaches and undertaking regulatory action.

B) Talk to the People Who Know

Officers from Planning and Approvals are usually very aware of the legislative requirements, prevention strategies and maintenance requirements for various erosion and sediment control treatments (measures).

Most of the successes in Local Governments throughout Australia and internationally is attributed to the high level of erosion and sediment control technical knowledge that is used in assessing and approving development applications, but they are often not responsible for compliance or infringements.

Officers with a good technical understanding can confidently challenge proposed measures and strategies which do not demonstrate best practice, if sediment discharge is becoming a frequent issue in your local government area, talk to your planners to see what can be done.

C) Strategies for Success

One of the biggest obstacles facing local government in sediment management and control is that very few people get to see the scale of the problem.

Prevention strategies are determined by planning officers and monitoring and compliance is sometimes a reactive process that doesn't stop the problem. Environmental health is responsible for investigating incidents, while works and operations bear the cost of remediating infrastructure assets such as blocked drains and stormwater systems.

Successful management of sediment at local government level improves the environmental health, public amenity and reduces maintenance costs, so it is important that your approach has strong support at a senior management level.



Things to Consider

- Analyse your investment in “cleaning up” soil and building sand from streets, gutters, drains, wetlands and waterways so you have an understanding of the financial costs of sedimentation resulting from urban development to make informed management decisions. Research undertaken by the Sediment Task Force and the University of Western Australia has shown that improper sediment management can cost local governments upward of \$2,182 per hectare of land developed in dredging costs alone.
- Commit to proactive monitoring, such as regular random scheduled monitoring of sites and the installation of water quality monitoring technologies, drainage infrastructure damage checks and sediment source investigations so monitoring for compliance is not just reactionary (e.g. only involving responding to complaints).
- Empower all staff likely to observe potential breaches to have the knowledge, skills and authority to report incidents of non-compliance.
- Implement a centralised incident reporting system to quickly resolve compliance breaches and to assess collective impacts (including downstream impacts).
- Ensure Officers who are responsible for planning approvals (particularly engineers) have received the appropriate training and have adequate knowledge of erosion and sediment control prevention measures to be applied to all new developments proposed. This will guarantee sediment control measures are in place prior to commencement of works and help ensure on site personnel are aware of their obligations and the seriousness of environmental contamination.
- Proactively assist builders and land developers to understand and fulfil their statutory obligations for erosion and sediment control when approving subdivision and residential building plans.
- Allocate sufficient financial resources across the organisation to monitor and enforce compliance.

For more assistance, refer to [Healthy Land and Water’s Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Internal Management Systems Review Report Template & Action Plan](#).

Further Information

Including STF On-Site Compliance Checklist for Local Government Officers

[Perth NRM: Sediment Taskforce](#)

[DWER - Authorised Officer Program](#)

[IPWEA - Local Government Guidelines for Subdivisional Development](#)

[Healthy Land and Water](#)

[IECA \(Australasia\) - Resources](#)

[IECA \(Australasia\) - Best Practice Erosion and Sediment Control \(BPESC\) Document](#)



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The Sediment Task Force is funded by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and supported by Perth NRM