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EPA shutting down illegal landfills

The EPA has shut down an unlicensed landfill in the Murraylands containing thousands of tonnes of construction and demolition waste – one of several such sites uncovered outside the Adelaide metropolitan area recently.

EPA Director Regulation, Peter Dolan said orders had been issued requiring the site operators to stop receiving waste.

“We are continuing to investigate and assess the sites, and have identified a number of waste transport companies that have been using them to dispose of waste,” Mr Dolan said.

“In the meantime, we are warning both landholders and waste transporters to be aware of their responsibilities, as both can face serious penalties.”

Mr Dolan said the majority of the SA waste industry did the right thing, but there were a few operators who tried to avoid regulatory oversight and save money on dumping fees.

“If you’re a landholder and you’re allowing waste transporters to dump on your property – even if you think you’re receiving fill – not only can you be left with an enormous clean-up bill, but you could also end up with serious site contamination that could destroy the value of your land,” he said.

“Likewise, if you’re a waste transporter, it’s not enough to say you didn’t know the site wasn’t licensed. If you haven’t personally sighted documentation including the EPA licence, council approval and the landowner’s consent, then you’re putting yourself and your business at risk.

“Make no mistake, we will seek criminal convictions and substantial fines for people operating unlicensed landfills, and those transporters who have brought material to these sites.”

As well as following up on information from the public, EPA investigators are using technology to help uncover unlicensed landfills, including satellite imagery to detect changes in the landscape, and microdots to mark and track waste that they suspect is going to be illegally dumped.

Already this year, three people have received sizeable fines in the Environment, Resources and Development Court for matters relating to illegal waste depots, and more cases are in train.

Last month, the EPA also disqualified a demolition contractor’s transport licence for three years after he was found to not be a fit and proper person.

Anyone with information regarding illegal landfill operations is encouraged to contact the EPA on 8204 2004.

Maximum penalties

- Operating a waste depot without a licence: \$120,000 for a company or \$60,000 for an individual.
- Unlawful disposal of waste: \$250,000 for a company and \$120,000 or two years’ imprisonment for an individual.
- Causing serious environmental harm: \$2,000,000 for a company and \$500,000 and/or four years’ imprisonment for an individual.