



**Tara Cheyne MLA**

Manager of Government Business  
Attorney-General  
Minister for Human Rights  
Minister for City and Government Services  
Minister for the Night-Time Economy

Member for Ginninderra

Mr Tom Duncan  
Clerk  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
London Circuit  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

26 November 2024

Dear Mr Duncan *Tom*

Thank you for your letter concerning petition E-PET-027-24 regarding Mugga Lane Landfill Concerns.

The petition tabled by former member for Brindabella, Ms Nicole Lawder draws the attention of the Assembly that since 2015, residents of certain Tuggeranong suburbs have been intermittently affected by the odour emanating from the Mugga Lane Resource Management facility. The petition calls on the ACT Government to:

- thoroughly investigate this issue and take appropriate action in response to the complaints;
- seek effective and immediate solutions to mitigate the adverse effects of the odour from the Mugga Lane Resource Management facility on the community; and
- notify residents in nearby suburbs ahead of time when works or changes take place at the facility which may have any impact at all on odour. As well as notify residents why the works are required, how long any impact might persist, and avenues for them to complain.

Some recent complaints have been attributed to the phytocapping trial area preparatory works currently being undertaken at the Mugga Lane Landfill. Preparatory site works for a phytocapping trial commenced in September 2023.

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To reduce odour generation during these works the added landfill waste is progressively covered with soil (so that only a limited area is exposed at any time) and the cell is covered at the end of each day. Works are required to be undertaken Monday to Friday and only when there is low wind and no rain.

To improve communication with residents, there are a number of project pages on the City Services website which are updated regularly to better inform members of the public about any scheduled works and the status of current works that may emit odours at the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre (MLRMC). Letterbox drops were delivered to residents March and June 2024. A factsheet and explainer video were also created to provide detailed information about the phytocap trial preparatory works. These resources are available on the phytocapping project page on the City Services website at [www.cityservices.act.gov.au/Infrastructure-Projects/tuggeranong/mugga-lane-landfill-rehabilitation](http://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/Infrastructure-Projects/tuggeranong/mugga-lane-landfill-rehabilitation).

Odours from solid waste management facilities are caused by the breakdown of organic material. Landfill facilities are not zero emitters of odour and under certain climatic conditions, odour will be detected beyond the MLRMC boundary. There are a number of operations undertaken within MLRMC which have the potential to emit odours, including everyday landfilling activities, mulching and processing of organic material or trenching work for the capture of landfill gas. Relevant operations are conducted under strict Environmental Authorisations (EAs), tailored conditions set by the ACT Environment Protection Authority (EPA) under which the activity is to be undertaken. EA odour controls include ceasing activities during periods of unfavourable weather (e.g. during high wind periods where the risk of odour transmission is increased) and ensuring any processed or exposed waste is covered as soon as possible during operational activities, with no landfill waste left exposed overnight. The size of the active tip face is also required to be no larger than 30mx30m. Odour complaints are investigated by the EPA.

Rehabilitation of ACT landfills is a mandatory requirement under the *Environmental Protection Act 1997* and a strategic commitment of the ACT Government. The Mugga Lane Landfill operates under EA 0375. This EA requires any landfill cell approved after 5 March 2012 to have a certain type of cap built over it – called a phytocap – once the cell reaches end of life. The phytocap process uses native plants, shrubs, grasses and trees to cap the cell. This means it is more environmentally friendly, requires less maintenance and is more durable to extreme weather and a changing climate. It is designed to minimise leachate generation by reducing water infiltration into the buried waste and to mitigate greenhouse emissions and odour.

More than a third of the ACT's household red bin contents (37 per cent) is food waste, which currently goes to landfill and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and odour generation in the landfill. To support the reduction of food ending up in landfill, the ACT Government has introduced a FOGO collection pilot. This pilot services 6,450 households in Belconnen, Bruce, Cook and Macquarie and selected apartments and townhouses in Tuggeranong and helps participants recycle

food scraps along with garden waste in their lime green lidded bin. The pilot will test the FOGO service before it is rolled out to the wider Canberra community.

To enable to city wide roll out of FOGO and strengthen Canberra's circular economy, the ACT Government is by investing in a large-scale Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) facility. Once complete, the reduction of organics placed into the landfill will further help to reduce odorous organic material in landfill. In conjunction with efforts to reduce organic material in landfill, the Mugga Lane Landfill has one of the largest landfill gas capture and processing systems in Australia. By capturing harmful gases before they escape into the atmosphere, the overall odour emitted from the landfill is minimised and the biogas can be used to generate energy. An expansion project currently underway will augment the existing landfill gas to energy plant's capacity to generate approx. 50,000 Megawatt hours of dispatchable energy and provide enough electricity to power up to 10,800 homes in the ACT each year.

Odour monitoring is undertaken quarterly at the Mugga Lane Landfill, the green waste processing facility, and at the Hume Materials Recovery Facility. The most recent surveys in September 2024 found that odour intensities emitting from the MLRMC ranged from 'very weak' to 'weak' in the proximity of existing residential areas (including Macarthur, Fadden, and Chisholm). This finding is consistent with the results of the previous round of odour monitoring in June 2024. Additional surveys conducted by the EPA in response to complaints have not detected any unacceptable odour in the surrounding residential areas. ACT NoWaste continues to work with the EPA and the contractors to investigate improved odour mitigation options and minimise potential odour impacts on the community.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Sincerely



Tara Cheyne MLA  
Minister for City and Government Services