

GARBAGE.

Initially the disposal of rubbish was the responsibility of the individual. Residents were permitted to dump rubbish in gullies in certain streets and the inspector of nuisances was to enforce council's decision on where rubbish could be dumped. The council improvement committee recommended in April 1868 a notice board be erected in a suitable place for the depositing of rubbish and that all persons be directed to deposit their rubbish there.¹

Six years later, the inspector of nuisances enquired 'whether parties were permitted to throw rubbish on Dangar street, near Dumaresq street'.² Consequently council decided to insert an advertisement in the papers informing residents about placing rubbish in streets. Three years later in September 1877, the town clerk was again directed to place an advertisement in the *Armidale Express* informing residents that no more rubbish was to be placed in Dangar Street but in a gully in Marsh Street above Reverend Johnstones's residence. The inspector of nuisance was also informed of this decision.

Council discussed the dumping of rubbish in a hole near the brewery in April 1884 and it was claimed 'water in it was quite enough to raise a plague'.³ The town clerk was again instructed to advertise that no rubbish was to be thrown in streets without the permission of council. Two years later the inspector of nuisances, Frank Schaupp was 'instructed to see that all refuse from within the Municipality (not of an objectionable nature) be thrown into the waterholes in Butler-street, known as Mr B. Well's properties'.⁴ In March 1891 residents on the Northern Road leading to Glen innes complained about rubbish being dumped close to their dwellings. The *Armidale Express*, 24 March 1891 commented: 'Surely there are ways and means of disposing of street or yard refuse outside the municipality, so as not to endanger the health of the inhabitants'.

Part of the area No. 20 708, notified for a temporary common on 5 May 1894, was gazetted on 12 May 1900 for a rubbish depot. It was an area of about 22 acres within the boundaries of reserve No. 30 932. This garbage depot was formed in the common near Alexandra Park coursing ground to the east of Armidale but in August 1902 the residents complained of the rubbish depot. Further concern was expressed in April 1903 about the poor state of the depot and notices were to be erected cautioning people against emptying rubbish outside the boundaries of the municipality. Council announced in August that the boundaries of the depot would be enclosed with wire and a subdivision of two acres would be enclosed with a paling fence at a probable cost of £55.

¹ Council minutes, 21 April 1868.

² *Armidale Express*, 11 April 1874, p.4.

³ Council minutes, 1 April 1884.

⁴ *Armidale Express*, 7 May 1886, p.4.

Concerns were again expressed about conditions at the dump in March 1904 and tenders were called for fencing of the depot in April. The two tenders for the wire and paling fencing were accepted in May. In August tenders were also called for clearing the paddock at the depot in preparation for grazing and agriculture. Tenders were again called in March 1905 for clearing the depot and appointing a caretaker. That month, the tender of W. Stoude was accepted for £2 10s for clearing the depot and W. Swanson was appointed a caretaker at 5s per week. Swanson served as caretaker until October 1922 when ill health forced his resignation.

The health inspector reported to council in August 1912 that the sanitary condition of the town would be much improved if a garbage system started in the most populous part of the town. Inspector Curry of the Board of Health concluded an annual inspection of the municipality in December 1912 and his chief cause of complaint was the absence of a garbage service. The Public Health Act of 1915 required councils to provide a garbage collection service. Council had the following powers conferred on it in January 1918: 'the maintenance and provision of garbage destructors, and the collection and destruction of garbage'.⁵ Because council was reluctant to act, the Chief Sanitary Inspector, Mr Cresswick from the Board of Health visited Armidale in 1918. Consequently council was instructed to instal a garbage service and the report implied 'the Board would seriously consider the adoption of legal means to compel the Council'.⁶

By 1916 the rubbish dump reserve was located on Long Swamp Road.

In February 1919 council called tenders for the removal of garbage from all premises within the municipality but later abandoned plans for a garbage service because of the difficulties of procuring the services of a carter.

Concerned about the dumping of house refuse and general debris on camping and stock reserves near Armidale, the Pastures Protection Board announced in May 1922, a new regulation under the P.P. Act. Any person depositing or causing to be deposited any rubbish upon any travelling stock or camping reserve under the control of the Board without permission, shall be liable to a penalty of £10.⁷

In April 1923 the Board of Health requested council instal a garbage service under the provisions of the Public Health Amendment Act of 1915, section 3 within ninety days. Council sought legal advice whether the Department of Health had the power to enforce the Act. Following legal advice, a sub-committee prepared a report and council asked the board to withdraw its order on the grounds that the municipality was healthy with a small number of infectious disease cases; household waste is put to good use on the large dwelling blocks;

⁵ *Armidale Express*, 25 January 1918, p.6.

⁶ *Armidale Express*, 27 September 1918, p.2.

⁷ *Armidale Chronicle*, 20 May 1922, p.4.

the Inspector is strict and 90% of the people do not need or desire a garbage service.⁸ The department was not willing to withdraw the order although it was prepared to consider an extension of time or some limitation of the area to be served.

Council agreed to the Board of Health's ultimatum to instal a garbage service in May 1923. This action lead to the presentation of two petitions from ratepayers which requested council call a public meeting to discuss the issue.⁹ The Board approved the modified garbage area suggested by council and granted an extension of time to 23 June 1923. Prolonged negotiations continued with Sydney for further extensions of time and a five year tender was eventually let for a combined service to James H. Boler to commence on 1 October 1923. The charges were 53/8d for sanitary and 21/2d for garbage. A number of residents applied for exemption but council refused. Initially the service was applied to the central part of town but after a six months trial it was applied to the whole municipality from April 1924.

By December 1927 there was reference to the old garbage depot and the new depot outside the municipality boundary.

In July 1939 tenders were invited for the combined sanitary and garbage services for a period of three years from 1 January 1940 with all work to be done by an approved motorised unit.

The *Armidale Express*, 21 February 1945 reported the health surveyor was 'seeking a more suitable site' for the garbage depot. In June 1946, council decided that the garbage dump should be moved away from East Armidale. That month, the health surveyor also reported that a man had undertaken to look after the depot and it had received daily attention for the past eight weeks. Tipping by private individuals was now controlled and the 'indiscriminate tipping for two or three years when the dump was unattended, had been overcome'.¹⁰

Council inaugurated its own plant and garbage service from 1 January 1949. Council advised the shire in January 1950 that extra labour will be provided to improve conditions at the depot. In April 1952 council adopted a proposal to locate a new site for the dump. The East Armidale Progress Association was informed in November that the proposed new site is considered to be more suitable and can be kept under close supervision. Council was informed in September 1953 that an officer of the Department of Public Health had inspected the site for the new garbage depot and had found it suitable.

⁸ Council minutes, 30 April 1923.

⁹ *Armidale Express*, 18 May 1923, p.8.

¹⁰ *Armidale Express*, 26 June 1946, p.8.

The Department of Lands advised council in January 1954 that the new site chosen on the Long Swamp Road about half a mile beyond the present site, was suitable. A petition from East Armidale residents against a proposed new site was presented to council in March 1954 because 'their area was subject to smell and fly nuisance from the present depot'.¹¹ The present dump had been there for some forty to fifty years and the new site was only a little over a quarter of a mile away. Council called for a report on the proposed new garbage site in April 1954 and the health surveyor, Les Brown reported the site comprised a disused gravel pit and labour costs will be kept to a minimum. Council took action to acquire a large incinerator for use at the new garbage disposal site in April.

The health surveyor reported to council in March 1955 that the new garbage depot would be used once an access road was constructed. Reserve No. 77925 for a rubbish depot was notified on 2 September. By November 1956, garbage disposal was located in the Long Swamp Road and a tractor was used with a pusher blade. The building and health surveyor commented the area would be of use from five to ten years and council would then need an area 'suitable for the institution of the Sanitary Landfill Method' using a bulldozer'.¹² Compacting at the dump was adopted when a crawler mounted shovel was purchased in October 1959.

The dump on the Castle Doyle Road had been under the control of the City Council until November 1958 when it reverted to Crown Land and was gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve. Sub-standard homes were built at the dump and in February 1960 the city health surveyor, R.E. Esdaile prepared a report for the Dumaresq Shire. At that stage only a single tap existed at the extreme southern end of the ground. Mr Esdaile commented that Aborigines living on the dump have 'the most appalling sanitary conditions one could imagine'.¹³ In August 1960 it was again claimed that the dump was a menace to health and the health inspector reported 'the present area of about 2 1/2 acres is almost exhausted'.¹⁴

That month, the East Armidale Progress Association requested council move the depot. Council announced plans in October 1960 to move the garbage depot two miles away from the Aboriginal Reserve. The East Armidale Progress Association protested against the proposed site in November and asked for it to be moved at least three miles from the present site and alternative proposals were presented to council in December 1960. In December the health surveyor reported that the site selected was three miles from the Post Office on the Grafton Road. It was an area of approximately six acres on council land, not used for sewerage purposes and was to cost £350. The alternative site was thirty acres on the Long Swamp Road to cost £600.

¹¹ *Armidale Express*, 24 March 1954, p.4.

¹² *Armidale Express*, 14 November 1956, p.6.

¹³ *Armidale Express*, 2 March 1960, p.1.

¹⁴ *Armidale Express*, 5 August 1960, p.13.

In March 1961 council approved a site on the eastern side of the city for the establishment of a new garbage depot; a 30 acre block on the night soil depot about one and a half miles from the city. The Department of Health approved the site provided a deep trench was cut and compacted. R.E. Esdaile, the city health surveyor reported in the *Armidale Express*, 27 December 1961 that 'the establishment of the new garbage depot has produced considerable improvement in garbage disposal'.

A garbage compaction unit, costing £30 000 arrived in Armidale in December 1964. The unit was able to load 28 cubic yards of garbage and compact it into a space of 14 cubic yards by means of a hydraulic ram. In November 1965 council announced that the town clerk, Mr Browne and the city health surveyor, D. Crawford would investigate a second garbage service during the summer. By September 1969 council supported in principle a twice weekly garbage collection service for Armidale and called for a report from the city health surveyor on the possibility of calling tenders.

The first anti-litter officer John Drumgold was appointed by council in July 1971.

Following complaints from East Armidale residents, the city health surveyor revealed that there were plans to move the site. A report was expected in June 1972. Action was to be taken to reduce burning at the dump and to cover garbage more frequently.

In 1985 council considered recommendations for large sized mobile bins prior to the appointment of contractors for Armidale's garbage service. But because of considerations concerning the future location of the garbage depot and the recycling depot, council announced in October 1988 'to wait another 12 months for a decision ... on the introduction of large mobile bins'.¹⁵

Council commissioned Maunsell, Consulting Engineers, Planners and Scientist in 1987 to undertake a study and identify the preferred strategy for the management of municipal waste for the next twenty years. The study was completed in September 1988 at a cost of \$15 000 and recommended: selected composting together with continued sanitary landfilling of council's solid waste system; expansion of the re-cycling programme in conjunction with the Challenge Foundation and extension and development of the existing landfill capacity. Council recognised the need to co-ordinate the efforts of local Service Clubs and was also concerned about the limited life span of the garbage tip. The re-cycling facility commenced operations in 1988 and provided employment for six Challenge Foundation employees and reduced the overall amount of waste.

The recycling centre was constructed at the council garbage depot on land leased to the Challenge Foundation. Council provided \$24 000 for power, water supply,

¹⁵ *Armidale Express*, 27 December 1961, p.16.

fencing and the building whilst Challenge provided \$24 000 towards establishing the centre including \$9000 for the purchase of household collection bags. The centre contracted the local garbage contractor to collect recycling bags from Armidale residents every four weeks; the local Apex clubs staffed the centre each weekend whilst the Lion Club's glass recycling operated alongside the centre. The centre had long term contracts with Southern Waste Re-cycling for the sale of cardboard and paper; a long term contract with Appin for paper whilst glass, aluminium, plastics, and other recyclables were sold on an open market.

By April 1996, the landfill operation was still situated at Portion 878 on Long Swamp Road and council was anxious to close the site as soon as practicable. At that stage, council had introduced: kerbside collection of recyclables; 240 litre 'wheelie bins' for general refuse and payment for the depositing of waste.

The Director of Planning and Environmental Services announced that Armidale was to get a \$1.4 million solid waste and recycling centre in June 1996. Council conditionally approved the facility to be constructed by Team Design Australia on council land on Long Swamp Road. To be operated by an Aboriginal community-based project it was announced 'the project will include a recycling depot (for sorting, packing and transporting offsite of recyclables for sale), green waste chipping (mulch production) and open window composting'.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Armidale Express*, 5 June 1996, p.5.