

Better Practice Guideline

Illegal Dumping of Shopping Trolleys

2026

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

Illegally dumped shopping trolleys are a persistent problem for Local Governments. Beyond looking unsightly, abandoned trolleys can block access ways for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians, damage property and harm the environment when they enter local waterways.

Although shopping trolleys are owned and managed by retailers for customer use, once they are removed from retail premises and abandoned, the expectation of management often shifts to Local Governments when retailers do not retrieve them in a timely manner.

While shopping trolleys make up only a small proportion of illegally dumped items, their size and bulk mean that they are time consuming and costly to collect, transport, store and dispose of.

Local Governments operate within a range of legislative frameworks that provide powers to retrieve, impound, fine or otherwise manage abandoned trolleys. This Better Practice Guideline outlines these legislative powers, along with recommended approaches to improve management and collaboration with retailers.



Abandoned shopping trolley on verge.

Objectives

The objective of the Guideline is to assist Local Governments in managing the illegal dumping of shopping trolleys.

Applicable Legislation

Activities in Thoroughfares and Public Places and Trading Local Law

Many Local Governments in Western Australia have a Local Law that contains provisions to respond to illegally dumped shopping trolleys. Shopping trolleys are most commonly addressed through the *Activities in Thoroughfares and Public Places and Trading Local Law*. This is a template Local Law available from the WALGA Governance website. An example of the relevant section in this Local Law is included in *Appendix 1*.

Under this Local Law:

- Retailers are required to clearly mark shopping trolleys with their name so they can be contacted to collect them.
- A person must not leave a shopping trolley in a public place, except in an area designated for trolley storage.
- Local Governments may notify retailers of the location of an abandoned trolley either verbally or in writing.
- Retailers must either remove the trolley within the prescribed timeframe or request that the Local Government retrieve and return it to the retailer, who then pay the associated fee.
- Local Governments are empowered to issue infringements to individuals who remove trolleys from shopping precincts.
- Local Governments also have the authority to issue infringements to retailers who fail to collect abandoned trolleys.

While the notice periods set out in a local law can be modified during the drafting stage, once the local law is adopted, they cannot be changed without a formal amendment process (i.e. the making of an amendment local law). Notwithstanding this, Local Governments retain discretion in

how strictly the notice periods are enforced. In areas experiencing frequent trolley theft or dumping, more robust enforcement may be appropriate to ensure retailers respond promptly.

Local Government Act

The relevant sections of the [Local Government Act 1995](#) are:

- Section 3.42. Impounded non-perishable goods
- Section 3.46. Goods may be withheld until costs paid
- Section 3.47. Confiscated or uncollected goods, disposal of
- Regulation 29B Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations – Prescribed non-perishable goods

The *Local Government Act* enables Local Governments to impound abandoned shopping trolleys and notify the retailer when and where they can be collected. The Local Government may charge a retrieval fee to recover the costs of removing, impounding and storing the trolleys. However, Local Governments have found it difficult to enforce these fees, as retailers choose to replace missing trolleys rather than pay impound charges.

If a trolley is not collected after one month of storage, the Local Government may dispose of it. Disposal options include auctioning the trolley, selling it for scrap metal, or arranging for it to be recycled. Wherever possible, the materials should be recovered rather than disposed of in landfill. Any proceeds or costs of selling or disposing of the trolley remains with the Local Government under Section 3.47 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Litter Act

The [Litter Act 1979](#) empowers Local Governments to issue on-the-spot fines to individuals who illegally dump shopping trolleys. Under the Act, any revenue raised through infringements issued by a Local Government is retained by that Local Government.

Better Practice Approaches

Record costs

Local Governments should record all costs associated with monitoring, collecting, storing and disposing abandoned shopping trolleys. Similarly, any income generated from selling the trolleys should be recorded.

Maintaining accurate records of both costs and income allows the Local Government to assess the financial impact of managing illegally dumped shopping trolleys and can support evidence-based decision-making and advocacy.

Adopt the Activities in Thoroughfares and Public Places and Trading Local Law

Local Governments are encouraged to include shopping trolley provisions in their *Activities in Thoroughfares and Public Places and Trading Local Law* to give the authority to issue infringements to retailers who fail to collect illegally dumped shopping trolleys within the prescribed notice period (see Appendix 1).

Use powers under the *Local Government Act 1995* and *Litter Act 1979*

Understand the enforcement powers and infringement provisions available under the *Local Government Act 1995* and the *Litter Act 1979* and apply them where appropriate to recover associated costs.

Engage with retailers

Maintaining effective relationships with retailers can be challenging due to frequent staff turnover. To streamline communication, Local Governments may wish to establish a single, consistent contact method for all trolley-related issues. For example, a dedicated email address for notifying retailers of dumped trolleys.

Encourage trolley containment measures

Local Governments can advise retailers to install trolley-containment systems, such as wheel-locking technology or coin-operated locks, to reduce trolley theft and illegal dumping.

- **Wheel-locking systems** use an underground cable installed around the perimeter of the shopping centre. When a trolley crosses the boundary, a self-locking wheel is activated, preventing it from being taken off the premises.
- **Coin or token-operated systems** require a coin or token to release a trolley from the bay, with the coin returned when the trolley is properly returned.

Cooperative monitoring

Local Governments can work collaboratively with retailers to identify trolley-dumping hotspots and ensure these areas are monitored frequently. Integrating these locations into the routine checks of both Local Government Rangers and retail staff can support early detection and timely removal of abandoned trolleys.

Consider options in planning for new shopping areas

Secure trolley storage is often overlooked in car park design, where the focus is typically on ensuring adequate manoeuvrability for vehicles. Local Governments can strengthen planning outcomes by considering the number, placement and accessibility of trolley bays during the design and approval process. Well-located bays make it easier for customers to return trolleys and help reduce the likelihood of abandonment and illegal dumping.

Resident reporting

Local Governments can encourage residents to report abandoned shopping trolleys. This can be supported by:

- **Providing clear reporting channels:** have a dedicated page on the Local Government website listing all the relevant trolley-reporting contacts, links to retailer reporting portals (e.g. [Trolley Tracker](#)) and guidance for residents on how and when to report abandoned trolleys. This page can also clarify resident responsibilities and explain why reporting matters. Confirm with retailers that these reporting channels are monitored and that reports will be actioned.
- **Running public awareness campaigns:** encourage residents to report abandoned trolleys and remind them that leaving a trolley in a public place is an offence. Reinforce that customers are responsible for returning trolleys to the shopping centre or designated

collection points. Increase visibility by placing reporting information at hotspot locations, such as bus stops near shopping centres, community noticeboards and retail precincts.

Appendix 1: Activities in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law

Division 2 - Shopping trolleys

4.3 Interpretation

In this Division –

"Retailer" means a proprietor of a shop in respect of which shopping trolleys are provided for the use of customers of the shop; and

"Shopping trolley" means a wheeled container or receptacle supplied by a retailer to enable a person to transport goods.

4.4 Shopping trolley to be marked

A retailer shall clearly mark its name or its trading name on any shopping trolley made available for the use of customers.

4.5 Person not to leave trolley in public place

A person shall not leave a shopping trolley in a public place other than in an area set aside for the storage of shopping trolleys.

4.6 Retailer to remove abandoned trolley

- (1) If a shopping trolley is found in a public place, other than in an area set aside for the storage of shopping trolleys, the local government may advise (verbally or in writing) a retailer whose name is marked on the trolley of the location of the shopping trolley.
- (2) A retailer shall remove a shopping trolley within 24 hours* of being so advised under subclause (1), unless the retailer -
 - (a) requests the local government to collect and deliver the shopping trolley to the retailer; and
 - (b) pays any fee for that collection and delivery (imposed and determined under and in accordance with sections 6.16 to 6.19 of the Act) within the period specified by the local government.

4.7 Retailer taken to own trolley

In the absence of any proof to the contrary, a shopping trolley is to be taken to belong to a retailer whose name is marked on the trolley.

*Note:

The Template Local Law allows 24 hours for collection, while some Local Laws require trolleys to be collected within 2–3 hours. The timeframe should suit local circumstances, such as preventing already-abandoned trolleys from being moved and dumped further away.