



Media Release

10 SEPTEMBER 2024

FAILURE TO CLEAN UP WASTE COSTS CENTRAL COAST MAN NEARLY \$200,000

Central Coast man, Mr Thomas Hughes has been fined more than \$112,000 for failing to comply with a Court order requiring the removal and disposal of waste at a property near Muswellbrook.

On 31 July 2019, Mr Hughes, the sole director, company secretary, and sole shareholder of a home construction company, was convicted of two waste offences after illegally burying thousands of cubic metres of building and demolition waste at a rural property in Sandy Hollow NSW.

Mr Hughes was fined and ordered to remove the waste and remediate the land at his own cost. Following amendments to the Court order, Mr Hughes was required to complete those works by 31 March 2023.

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) commenced proceedings in the Land and Environment Court after Mr Hughes failed to comply with the Court order to remove the waste.

NSW EPA Executive Director of Operations, Jason Gordon, welcomed Mr Hughes's conviction.

"Those who do the wrong thing and illegally dump waste will face the consequences including cleaning up," Mr Gordon said.

"Mr Hughes was ordered to dig up and dispose of the waste. He then failed to finish the clean-up after being given an extended deadline, which was more than three years after the orders were made.

"The delay in clean-up was unacceptable and resulted in further harm to the environment. The dumped waste included construction and asbestos materials and the impacted land remained unvegetated and subject to soil erosion."

The Court found the offence caused actual and potential harm to the environment due to the nature of the waste. It caused land degradation and had the potential to contaminate groundwater and the surrounding soil and pose a significant risk to human health due to the presence of asbestos.

"Illegal dumping threatens the health of our communities and environment. Failure to dispose of waste correctly will not be tolerated and we will hold dumpers to account," Mr Gordon said.

Mr Hughes was also ordered to pay the EPA's legal costs totalling more than \$80,000. It's the first time the EPA has prosecuted an individual in the Land and Environment Court for this type of offence.

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