The Team
The research team includes Rob White, Professor of Criminology at the University of Tasmania, and Diane Heckenberg, a researcher in the School of Sociology and Social Work at UTAS. The project is funded by the Australian Research Council

Key Questions
The study is informed by four basic questions:

- What is the size and seriousness of the problems associated with disposal of hazardous waste in Australia?
- Who actually does environmental law enforcement in the area of hazardous waste disposal and under what legislative parameters?
- How is environmental law enforcement of hazardous waste disposal carried out in practice?
- Which agencies are currently involved in collaborative approaches to policing hazardous waste and how well do they work?

Outcome
The expected outcome of the research is the construction of baseline data in regards to the nature of the problems associated with disposal of hazardous waste; which agencies are doing what and under which regulatory regimes; identification of barriers and opportunities for collaborative inter-agency work; and development of models of practice suitable to the enhancement of environmental law enforcement capacity and effectiveness. This will be of benefit to police and non-police agencies operating at all jurisdictional levels, and particularly those agencies concerned with issues of illegal disposal of hazardous waste

Environmental Harm is a Crime

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The Study

Stage 1 — Mapping the extent of problems associated with hazardous waste disposal

Exploration of definitions of hazardous waste, and the construction of an inventory of opportunities and evidence of criminal activities in this area.

Examples of data collection
Agency annual reports, summaries of prosecutions, reporting of events

Examples of key questions
What is hazardous waste?
Who produces hazardous waste?
How is hazardous waste transported and disposed of, and by whom?
What illegal activities are associated with disposal of hazardous waste?

Stage 2 — Mapping of agencies and legislative parameters

A systematic mapping of Australian law enforcement agencies involved in policing hazardous waste and the legislative parameters within which they work, with particular attention to agencies in Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania.

Examples of data collection
Review of Australian environmental enforcement agencies involved in policing hazardous waste at the local, state, federal and international level

Examples of key questions
What is the nature and range of legislation for each relevant agency?
What is the scope of agency power in relation to inspection, investigation, enforcement, prosecution?
How quickly and effectively can the agency respond to breaches?
What strategies can and does the agency use to enforce compliance?
What are their legislative and operational strengths and weaknesses?

Stage 3 — Mapping of agency enforcement practices

Identify and document the nature and scope of agency enforcement practices in relation to hazardous waste

Examples of data collection
In-depth interviews with key agency personnel in relation to the nature and scope of enforcement practices

Examples of key questions
Who is doing the inspections?
Who is doing the investigating?
Who is doing the policing?
Who is doing the prosecuting?
How are states similar or different in their approaches?

Stage 4 — Mapping of collaborative practices

Examine which agencies are presently involved in collaborative approaches to policing hazardous waste and how they work with other agencies around such matters

Examples of data collection
In-depth interviews with key agency personnel to identify trends and patterns in collaborative practices

Examples of key questions
What co-operative formal and informal networks are in place involving other Government and non-government agencies?
Do affiliations and web links translate into collaborative practices at the operational level?
What factors inhibit cross-agency information sharing?
What factors enhance collaborative operations?
What protocols exist for information sharing?