

**Submission
No 26**

**INQUIRY INTO REGULATION OF BUILDING
STANDARDS, BUILDING QUALITY AND BUILDING
DISPUTES**

Name: Cr Cath Blakey

Date Received: 17 July 2019

There are numerous instances where private certifiers fail to ensure waste management and soil erosion compliance. Here is just one from yesterday's local paper:

<https://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/6276979/toxic-building-debris-blown-into-west-dapto-farm-endangers-cows/>

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Toxic building debris blown into West Dapto farm endangers cows

Ashleigh Tullis

Clean up needed: A Wongawilli farmer's son, John Nobbs, wants Wollongong City Council to help clean up polystyrene used in building slabs that blew onto his father's farm. Picture: Robert Peet

A farmer has been forced to relocate his herd of cows after life-threatening building material was blown onto his farm at Wongawilli during wild winds on the weekend.

Hundreds of polystyrene waffle pods used in concrete slabs from a neighbouring housing development were strewn across Reg Nobbs' paddocks.

If the cows eat the substance it could kill them.

The 74-year-old farmer and his son John are desperate to get the toxic debris removed.

"The cattle can't eat any of it because it can kill them," John Nobbs said. "It has sterilised the land.

"The cattle need to move around as they eat grass. It is scattered across every paddock.

"Now that it is in the dam, it will stay there until a flood washes it out to Lake Illawarra.

"It has become airborne and travelled onto neighbouring properties and onto roads."

Mr Nobbs has been left wondering who will clean up the pollution spread across hundreds of acres.

"There are big and little pieces that have been broken on the fences," he said.

"It is not our waste and there is so much of it that we would need a semi-trailer to put it all in.

"Then we would have to dispose of it and I doubt the council would let us do that for free."

Mr Nobbs said his father, who had been farming at the property for 32 years, had left to travel overseas on Monday and he was desperate to get the debris removed.

"The NSW Environment Protection Authority said it was not its problem and my father called Wollongong City Council," John Nobbs said. "We hope this doesn't become a buck passing situation."

A Wollongong City Council spokeswoman said the responsibility of the clean-up of the large polystyrene waffle pods lay with the owner of the material.

"As the owners of the properties [in the housing development] could not be identified, Wollongong City Council is proactively working with private landowners to assist in the clean-up of this material to reduce its environmental and visual impact," she said.

"Council's crew are collecting polystyrene blown on or along West Dapto Road, along waterways and where we receive permission from private landowners to enter their properties, we will also assist them in the clean up of the material on private land."

The spokeswoman said the council would be making appropriate enquiries to determine the source of the pollution and would take regulatory action where required.

"Due to the scale and spread of the material, it's anticipated this work will take the rest of the week," she said.