



Litter Facts and Impacts

Litter impacts on our health and our environment in a variety of ways – from poisoning waterways to causing bush fires. Read more facts and impacts below:

What's the problem?

1. Australians generate almost 32 million tons of rubbish each year. About seven billion cigarette butts end up in our waterways, streets and parklands each year and about 80 million plastic bags are dumped, creating a serious threat to our precious marine life.

Most littered items

2. According to the most recent National Litter Index - an Australian audit measuring litter around the country by site, item and volume:
 - Across Australia the most littered items by item are cigarette butts - of every item littered, 49% of items are discarded butts. [Read more...](#)
 - Plastic objects are the most littered by volume of material.
 - The most littered sites are retail sites/shopping centres, industrial locations and highways. [Read more...](#)
3. There are over 4000 chemicals in a cigarette butt that leach into water within one hour of contact. When a butt is littered on the street, there is a high chance it will end up in our waterways. Would you swim in a pool or drink a glass of water that had butts floating in it? Yuck!
4. Australians throw away about 7,150 recyclable plastic bags a minute, with 429,000 recyclable plastic supermarket bags dumped into landfill every hour. [Read more ...](#)
5. According to the National Litter Index, some of the most littered take away food wrapping includes: flavoured milk cartons, take-away cups and containers, cigarette packaging, paper bags and ice cream wrappers. [Read more...](#)

Litter hurts wildlife

6. Litter can harm and kill wildlife. Cigarette butts and small plastic items are often mistaken for food by marine life and have been found in the stomachs of young birds, sea turtles and other marine creatures. [Read more....](#)

What people think about litter

7. A recent survey of 400 Australians revealed the campaign messages that the community feels are most likely to discourage people from littering were in relation to cigarettes posing a bushfire risk and damage to marine life and waterways.

8. In littered areas, people are more likely to report feeling unsafe. Littered areas attract more graffiti and billposting and increase the risk of anti-social behaviour and crime.

Littering behaviour

9. People are more likely to litter in less populated areas, areas that are already dirty, in the car, and in areas where bins are less accessible and obvious.
10. Research shows that more than one in every five people are litterers and people most likely to litter are young people aged between 15 and 24.
11. There's no stereotypical 'litterer'. People respond to the place they are in, what others are doing and the bins or infrastructure available. The more cues that are around reminding people not to litter, the more chance of success!
12. Littering behaviour studies have found that people are more likely to litter when they are in a group - the larger the group the more likely people are to litter. These findings suggest there may be some influence of peer pressure on littering behaviour.

Did you know?

13. Have you ever thrown an apple core out your car window, thinking 'the birds will eat it'? Did you know that disposing organic matter incorrectly is still littering? Littering your food can draw animals near to the roadside or cause them to ingest bacteria that may be harmful to them.
14. Littering is an environmental crime. Around Australia people can be given fines ranging up to \$250,000.

References: Victoria Litter Action Alliance www.litter.vic.gov.au; Litter Prevention Strategy for Western Australia 2009-2014.

For more information visit www.kabc.wa.gov.au or go to www.kab.org.au to find a Keep Australia Beautiful office in your state.



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