



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP

Australian Minister for the Environment and Water Resources

T10/07

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LITTER ON THE INCREASE

The volume of litter across Australia has increased by 7 per cent over the past year, according to a national litter index part-funded by the Australian Government.

The Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index measures the types and amounts of litter across Australia and is based on audits conducted between May and November 2006.

It has found that highway litter now accounts for almost half of all litter in terms of volume. And that illegal dumping is a major contributor to Australia's litter problem.

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Malcolm Turnbull MP said it would be worrying to see Australia follow the UK lead where illegal dumping becomes a major litter and public health issue.

"Illegal dumping poses a threat to humans and wildlife, damages our environment and spoils our enjoyment of our towns and countryside," Mr Turnbull said.

Mr Turnbull said he was also concerned about litter in our waterways.

"Litter, especially items washed into our waterways pose a serious environmental problem," Mr Turnbull said.

"It can leach impurities, chemicals and toxins into our water and affect organisms dependent on that water for survival. Australians value water now more than ever. It does not make sense to damage our waterways through thoughtless littering."

The Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index is designed to highlight the extent and nature of Australia's litter problem to help inform waste management policy and encourage individual action to reduce litter.

"I would encourage Australians to think before they drop their rubbish," Mr Turnbull said.

"Our litter problem is something that can be easily fixed if everyone makes a conscious effort to dispose of their packaging and litter responsibly. It is a matter of thinking before throwing and everyone can do their bit."

For further information visit www.kab.org.au

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National Litter Index – at a glance

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Top dozen litter items	Top dozen litter items by volume
Cigarette butts	Illegal dumping
Other paper (including tissues)	Containers, domestic type (plastic)
All other plastic	Containers, industrial e.g. oil (plastic)
Snack bags and confectionery wrappers (plastic)	Cups/take away containers (paper)
Metal bottle tops and can pull rings	Newspapers and magazines
Plastic bottle tops	Beer, aluminium, all types, all sizes
Straws	Flav. water/soft drink (carbonated) <1 litre (plastic)
Other glass	Water, carbonated and flavoured/soft drink (metal)
Other foil	Alcoholic sodas and spirit-based mixers (metal)
Cigarette packets	Flavoured water/soft drink (carbonated) 1 litre+ (plastic)
Beer, aluminium, all types, all sizes	Beer, <750ml, all colours of glass
Cups/take away containers (paper)	Cigarette packets

Worst sites:

- Highways (items 32%, volume 49%)
- Car Park (17%, volume 13%)
- Industrial (items 12%, volume 16%)
- Retail (items 9%, volume 2%)
- Residential (items 8%, volume 9%)
- Shopping Centre (items 8%, volume 2%)
- Recreational Park (items 7%, volume 4%)
- Beach (items 6%, volume 5%)

Highlights from state and territory sample sites:

- ACT: worst for cigarette butt litter
- NSW: illegal dumping continues to be a serious issue
- NT: illegal dumping an issue
- QLD: largest drop in total litter items
- SA: increase in illegal dumping – almost doubled, less beverage containers & cigarette butts
- TAS: plastic litter increasing in volume
- VIC: total number of litter items up 60% from same time last year, lowest in highway litter
- WA: increased plastic and paper litter

* 20.6% of Australians smoke and they each smoke an average of 99 cigarettes each week. Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2004, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare