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Latest littering snap-shot out today

Minister for Climate Change and Environment Verity Firth today released NSW figures from the annual Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index.

Ms Firth said the nationwide survey shows the while the total volume of litter on NSW streets and beaches is down, NSW smokers are still not getting the message about binning their butts.

“The Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index is the only national quantitative measure of litter,” Ms Firth said.

“NSW has helped fund the report to give us and local councils a picture of what is being dropped and where.

“Today’s figures show that cigarette butts again top the list, accounting for one out of every two litter items on our streets.”

Ms Firth said the results showed:

- Litter volume in NSW is down 20% from last year;
- However, the number of individual litter items has increased across the sites surveyed (more items but each of smaller size – chiefly the result of cigarette butt litter);
- Cigarettes continue to top the list of the most littered items in NSW, accounting for 50 per cent of all items littered;
- Our beaches and parks have less litter than ever;
- The most littered sites occur in industrial areas, shopping centres and along highways.

Ms Firth said the report reinforced the need for all levels of government and the community to continue working together on the problem.

“Everyone has a role in stopping litter clogging up our bushland, our waterways and our local streets,” she said.

“We are asking smokers, particularly, to use street bins or to carry personal cigarette butt containers with them when they head out.

“While most in the community wouldn’t now throw a wrapper or a drink bottle on the street, the same cannot yet be said of cigarette butts.

“Many smokers continue to believe, incorrectly, that cigarette butts will biodegrade quickly without any harm to the environment.”

Ms Firth said the NSW Government was working with local councils to change littering behaviour, both through penalties and education.

“Together, the NSW Government and local councils have issued more than 7,000 littering fines this year.

“The lemma Government is also running the *Don't be a Tosser* campaign, with a total of \$339,000 this year to councils for 21 anti-litter education projects across the State.

“The campaign aims to make people think about what they are really throwing away when they rubbish our streets, parks and waterways.”

In addition, Ms Firth said the NSW Government was supporting numerous programs to reduce illegal dumping.

“Illegal dumping can have a disastrous impact on the local environment, including on the water supply in local catchments and waterways,” Ms Firth said.

“Cleaning up illegally dumped material also imposes a substantial financial cost, which is ultimately borne by the whole community.

“Earlier in the year the Government produced material to help NSW councils understand and utilise the tough illegal dumping powers they have available to them.

“Later this year we will also convene a forum on illegal dumping prevention, with a focus on construction and demolition waste.

“With local councils, we have also set up Regional Illegal Dumping Squads to address illegal dumping on the urban fringes of western Sydney, the South Coast and Southern Highlands.

“And through our Aboriginal Lands Clean Up program, we are working with local councils and Local Aboriginal Land Councils to remove illegally dumped waste and stop new waste being dumped on Aboriginal-owned lands.”

Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Chief Executive Officer Peter McLean said the results of the National Litter Index were essential in determining the best approach to combating litter in NSW.

"Although we are seeing positive reductions in litter on our beaches, parks and bushland areas, it is discouraging to see that cigarette butts are by far our number one litter item," Mr McLean said.

“Cigarette butts and high litter counts on our highway, industrial and retail areas are largely responsible for litter results here in NSW.

“Keep Australia Beautiful NSW looks forward to taking up this challenge and working with State and Local government as well as the business community to actively reduce littering in NSW.”

The full report is available at www.kab.org.au.

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