



Media Release

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National research shows smokers continue to be the worst litter bugs

Australians' littering habits have resulted in a 7% increase in volume of litter across the country in the latest results of the Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index released by Keep Australia Beautiful and the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull MP today.

The results indicate that smokers remain the largest contributors to the number of litter items counted in Australia, with cigarette butts accounting for almost half of the total number of litter items in the last count.

According to Keep Australia Beautiful National Chairman, Don Chambers, "Only 20% of Australians may smoke, but by failing to dispose of their cigarette butts properly, they are generating one of Australia's worst litter problems and seriously impacting on our environment and water quality."

"This represents 400 million* cigarette butts being used every week, with a significant number of these ending up as litter. And whilst there has been a slight drop in the number of butts counted in our research over the past two years, it is clear that far more needs to be done."

Meanwhile the proportion of highway litter continued to rise in the period between May and November 2006 and is almost a third (32%) of all litter now, compared to just over a quarter (27%) a year ago. In terms of volume, illegal dumping has also been identified as a major contributor to Australia's litter problem and is a problem area for the Northern Territory.

"Litter, especially items that are washed into our waterways, is a serious environmental problem. Australians are more aware than ever of how precious water is on this continent and value our coasts and oceans – so it doesn't make sense to be damaging them through thoughtless littering."

This is something that can be easily fixed if everyone simply disposed of their packaging and litter responsibly. It's a matter of thinking before throwing." Mr Chambers said.

To coincide with the release of the NLI results, Keep Australia Beautiful is giving away 1,200 'Stubbi' personal ashtrays featuring the KAB logo in every State and Territory. In the Territory, smokers will be able to pick up a personal ashtray early in the week from Casurina Shopping Town, Smith Street Mall Darwin and selected areas in Palmerston.

Media Contacts:

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Editors notes:

The Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index is the only national, twice yearly, quantitative measure of litter in Australia and is based on a methodology that has been refined over 20 years. It details litter by type, by location and by brand and compares between representative sites in each state rather than the full area or population of the state. The Neighbourhood Litter Count – a version for members of the public to measure litter in their own neighbourhood can be found at www.kab.org.au

National Litter Index – at a glance

Dirty Dozen by Number items	Dirty Dozen 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

Smoking Statistics

*: 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