



19 February 2007

Media statement

Highway litter lets down State

Western Australians are continuing to use highways as major dumping grounds for their rubbish, the third National Litter Index has found.

The November 2006 litter count results released today show WA's highways are the State's major litter catchment sites, registering 32 per cent of the number of items found and 49 per cent of the volume of litter.

Keep Australia Beautiful Council chair Mel Hay said it was disappointing that despite increased awareness of the impacts of litter, some people were still showing little regard for public spaces.

"WA's current top three litter sites are highways, car parks and industrial areas which suggests there are still some attitudes out there that public areas are someone else's problem," he said.

"Sadly, we also registered an increase in litter at our beaches, which we all know can have a detrimental effect on our oceans and marine life."

Overall, WA recorded an increase in litter items (16, 217 up from 15, 232) with the main culprits being plastic and paper.

"Plastic items in the litter count increased from 16 per cent to 22 per cent and paper/paperboard was up two percent," Mr Hay said.

"We've taken great steps in this State to educate people about littering and to make available better recycling processes – so dropping plastics and paper into our precious environment is really not acceptable.

"There are many members of our community who work very hard to clean up rubbish along our road sides and this is undone with a careless toss of a cup or can out a car window."

Mr Hay said the public could help to identify offenders by getting involved in KAB's Litter Report Scheme.

For more information about the scheme or to register, log on to www.kabc.wa.gov.au

Mr Hay said that while there had been a number of increases recorded in the count, there had also been some small improvements.

"After topping the nation last year for having the greatest proportion of cigarette butts in our litter stream, the latest count recorded a drop in the amount of butts (from 53 per cent to 43 per cent).

"It's only a very small improvement – cigarette butts made up 76 per cent of the litter found at retail sites, so they do remain a significant problem and a key focus for WA."

In terms of volume, illegally dumped materials continue to top WA's list.

Ends

DEC media: 6364 6499 (See over page for additional information)

Additional information

- The National Litter Index is held twice a year.
- The first wave was held in November 2005, the second wave in May 2006 and the latest wave in November 2006.
- The National Litter Index results will be available on the national Keep Australia Beautiful website. Go to <http://www.keepaustraliabeautiful.org.au/>
- For more information on the KABC Litter Report Scheme, call 6467 5129 or log onto the KABC website
- **Australia's dirty dozen – top 12 litter items**
 1. Cigarette butts
 2. Other paper including tissues
 3. All other plastic
 4. Snack bags and confectionary wrappers (plastic)
 5. Metal bottle tops and can pull rings
 6. Plastic bottle tops
 7. Straws
 8. Other glass
 9. Other foil
 10. Cigarette packets
 11. Beer, aluminium, all types, all sizes
 12. Cups/take away containers (paper)