



## Media Release – For August 2011

### Harmful impacts of litter drives Keep Australia Beautiful Week campaign

Keep Australia Beautiful (KAB) Week is happening again this year, kicking off August 22<sup>nd</sup> and will remind all Australians that litter on our streets can pollute our oceans, rivers and other waterways, and poses a serious threat to our marine animals and other wildlife.

The results of the National Litter Index (NLI), Australia's only national litter count undertaken at 1,067 sites twice a year to identify litter types, where they are found and in what volume, will be presented by Alec Wagstaff, Chair of the Australian Packaging Covenant, at a national breakfast event being held at the start of KAB Week on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> August at Taronga Zoo in Sydney.

Other keynote speakers include Newcastle environmentalist Tim Silverwood, who will discuss his research trip into the North Pacific Gyre, otherwise known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, and the Curator of Lord Howe Island Museum, Ian Hutton OAM, who will present his research into the impact of marine debris on local seabirds.

Around 8 million items of litter enter the marine environment every single day, with an estimated 70% of this litter ending up on the sea bed, 15% on beaches and the remaining 15% floating to the surface.

According to Keep Australia Beautiful spokeswoman, Lara Shannon, "Around 80% of marine debris is washed from land, with cigarette butts, food and drink wrappers and fishing gear making its way into our oceans and rivers through run-off from storm water drains, or being left on beaches and river banks."

"Entanglement and ingestion are the primary types of direct damage to wildlife caused by marine litter with at least 77 species of marine wildlife found in Australian waters being affected. Sea turtles, seabirds, dolphins and sea lions are particularly vulnerable with plastic materials and discarded fishing lines, hooks and nets causing the most damage."

"This is such an avoidable problem that we can all play a part in addressing by simply taking responsibility for where our litter ends up." Shannon added.

To support the Keep Australia Beautiful Week campaign, schools and local councils are being encouraged to get involved to help generate awareness in their local community.

The Hungry Jack's 'Bag it and Bin it' program is Principal Sponsor of Keep Australia Beautiful Week with restaurants around the country featuring themed tray liners to remind the public of the need to dispose of their packaging waste responsibly.

Tickets for the breakfast presentation can be purchased for \$90, which includes breakfast, beverages and \$10 from every ticket sold will go to KAB as a tax deductible donation.

For further information about KAB Week, to book your ticket to the breakfast event or to download posters and other resources visit [www.kab.org.au](http://www.kab.org.au)

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## TOP 'LITTER-FREE' TIPS

- Always put your rubbish securely in a bin or recycle it whenever possible. Don't throw any litter in the street or gutter as storm water drains flow straight to our waterways.
- Secure your garbage bin lid so litter doesn't blow free when emptied or if overfilled.
- Keep a carry/tidy bag in your car for your rubbish and for when you go walking near the ocean or other waterways. Every piece of litter you pick up is one less that can cause harm.
- Cigarette butts are the single biggest litter item and are harmful to wildlife on the land and in our waterways. Always stub out your butts and put them in a bin.
- Pack a waste-free lunch avoiding individual packets, plastic bags or cling wrap. Pack in reusable containers or wraps.
- Never allow toxic chemicals such as paints, fertilizers or pesticides and oils to enter the storm water system where it can flow into the ocean, poisoning marine animals and plants.
- If you see an injured marine mammal, bird or fish, report it to the RSPCA.
- When fishing, avoid disposables – pack food and bait in reusable containers, buy products without plastic packaging or remove packaging before you leave home.
- When boating, always refuel on land, never discharge wastes, oil or sewage into the marine environment.

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