

Keep Australia Beautiful Press Release and Newsletter Article

'Lost Dog' Roger highlights branded litter issue

An outdoor advertising campaign featuring Schmackos brand icon, Roger the dog, has raised the debate over who is responsible for litter on our streets – company's and their brands, or the customers who purchase their products?

The national campaign featured 'Lost Dog' posters with pull off paper tags placed on street poles across Australia, including outside the national office of Keep Australia Beautiful – whose focus is reducing Australia's litter.

Concerned about the corporate exploitation of public open space, likelihood of it leading to litter and increased clean up costs for local councils, Keep Australia Beautiful contacted the brand owners, Mars Petcare Australia, who took immediate steps to address the issue.

Manager Corporate Affairs, Mars Petcare Australia, Duncan Hall said: "As a company, we are committed to good environmental practices across all facets of the business and continually making improvements where we can. When we were alerted to the potential litter impact of our 'lost dog' street posters, we realised that despite it being a great creative idea it may have unwittingly become litter. We took immediate steps to remove the 'lost dog' posters from street poles across the country in line with Keep Australia Beautiful's recommendations," Stanic added.

Whilst the prompt and positive reaction by the company has been welcomed by Keep Australia Beautiful, the group says it highlights the debate and work they have been doing in the area of branded litter.

Keep Australia Beautiful National Executive, Scott Lyall, said: "We congratulate Mars Petcare Australia on a creative marketing campaign that works well in mainstream media. It does highlight however that many companies are not considering the full impact that their advertising materials and packaging may be having on our local environment.

"In this case we were able to work with the company to resolve the issue of illegal posters on street poles, but there is still much work to be done in this area with brands and their customers, and it raises the question of who should take responsibility for branded litter on our streets."

Keep Australia Beautiful launched its first national Branded Litter Study in 2008, to help identify what products and brands make up the majority of Australia's litter. The aim of the study was to encourage these companies, brands and their customers to address litter reduction and resource recovery issues.

According to the National Chairman of Keep Australia Beautiful, Don Chambers: “With this research companies now have clear indications of which brands make up the majority of the litter stream and which customers, they may need to place more focus on when delivering anti-litter messages and campaigns.”

Keep Australia Beautiful is currently finalising a follow on to the Branded Litter Study that compares the list of brand owners identified in the study with the list of signatories to the National Packaging Covenant.

The follow on report will identify signatories whose litter reduction activities are listed with the National Packaging Covenant, non signatories who list their litter reduction activities with Keep Australia Beautiful and finally it will list companies and brands who are not signatories and who have no litter reduction activities to report.

The research is made possible by funding from British American Tobacco Australia who share Keep Australia Beautiful’s desire to encourage voluntary action by industry that will lead to litter reduction and increased resource recovery. British American Tobacco Australia has been a signatory to the National Packaging Covenant since 2000.

The results will be made public and Keep Australia Beautiful hopes it will encourage those companies who don’t have a program in place yet, to start taking responsibility for the products and packaging they produce. The report will also remind members of the public that used packaging should be disposed of responsibly.

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The Keep Australia Beautiful Branded Litter Study Update will be released in late June. Details at <http://www.kab.org.au/litter-research/what-we-do/branded-litter-study/>

The Lost Dog Roger campaign, updated to remove mention of street posters, can be viewed at: <http://www.wheresroger.com.au>

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