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Media Statement

WA has nation's biggest butts

Cigarette butts make up nearly half of Australia's litter stream and are the biggest litter contributor in WA, the latest National Litter Index has found.

WA's Keep Australia Beautiful Council chair Mel Hay said WA topped the nation for the greatest proportion of cigarette butts in its litter stream.

"WA had an overall increase in litter items however the significant rise in cigarette butts is a great concern," he said.

"The proportion of butts rose from 42 percent to 53 percent over a six-month period and they were mostly dropped along highways, closely followed by car parks and industrial and retail sites."

Mr Hay believed this highlighted many people's attitudes to littering.

"The trends tend to show that people don't place a great deal of value on keeping these public areas clean and they see them as someone else's problem," he said.

"Clearly, we need greater awareness of the effects of littering and for more disposal facilities to be made available to the public."

He added that such facilities were needed more than ever following the recent ban on indoor smoking in public areas.

Other items high on the list of dropped materials were paper, tissues and snack or confectionary wrappers. For the first time, shopper dockets made the nation's "dirty dozen" list.

In terms of volume of litter in WA, illegally dumped materials remain the greatest problem.

Plastic materials topped the list at 39 percent, closely followed by paper and paperboard at 22 percent.

Mr Hay said the proposed tougher penalties for illegal dumping would help to address the problem of illegal dumping and send a clear message to potential offenders.

"Members of the public can also play a part in reporting people who litter or illegally dump rubbish through the KABC Litter Report Scheme," he said.

For more information about the scheme, call 6467 5129.

The Keep Australia Beautiful Council will use the National Litter Index results to guide litter prevention initiatives in WA.

Keep Australia Beautiful WA is supported by the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Ends

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(See over page for additional information)

Additional information

- The National Litter Index is held twice a year.
- The first index was held in November 2005 and the latest count was held in May.
- A total of 151 sites were selected in each State (except Tasmania) for analysis.
- The same sites are assessed at each count.
- The National Litter Index results will be available on the national Keep Australia Beautiful website. Go to <http://www.keeppaustraliabeautiful.org.au/>
- Australia's Dirty Dozen – Top 12 Litter Items
 1. Cigarettes
 2. Other paper, including tissues
 3. Snack bags and confectionery, plastic
 4. All other plastic
 5. Metal bottle tops and can ring pulls
 6. Plastic bottle tops
 7. Straws
 8. Cigarette packets
 9. Cups/take away containers, paper
 10. Other foil
 11. Lolly/Chupa Chupa sticks
 12. Shopper docket & related shopping paper